

The letters of Frederick Dibblee

Victorian railway engineer in India

Introduction

Oct 1885 – Feb 1886 **Benares Cuttack Puri Railway survey**

Apr 1886 – Sep 1886 **Hazaribagh** - waiting for next job

Oct 1886 – Nov 1886 **Singapore** - on leave

Dec 1886 – May 1888 **Mandalay**

Jun 1888 – Aug 1888 **Rangoon** – waiting for next job

Sep 1888 **Calcutta**

And afterwards

Locations

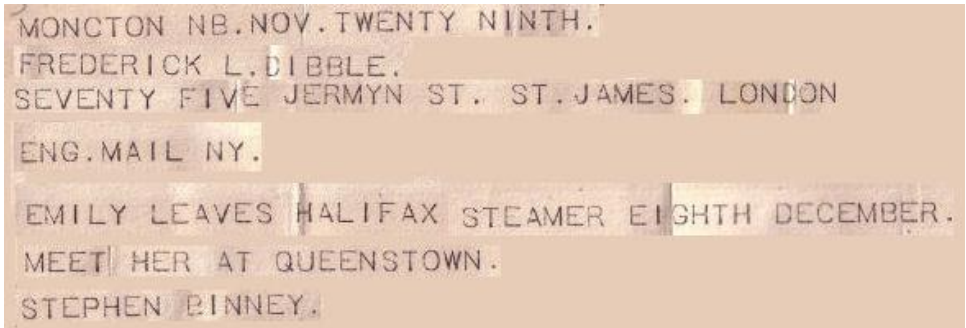
Vocabulary used by the British in India

Introduction

How did Fred and Emily met?

Frederick Lewis Dibblee was born in 1837, in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. In 1856, he began his apprenticeship under the chief engineer of government railways in New Brunswick. He met and fell in love with Emily Binney, a daughter of Stephen Binney, a business man living in Moncton, NB. It seemed Emily's parents opposed the marriage, but anyway, Fred could not yet support a wife. Emily later told her daughter the following story. Fred suggested to Emily that he should travel outside Canada, and look for a promising opening abroad. If he did - would she wait for him? Emily gave a very realistic answer. "I'll wait five years" she said "and if by that time you haven't been successful - I shall have to look elsewhere for a husband."

So, in 1863, Fred went to Brazil for work. Then he crossed the Atlantic, to work on the East Prussian line. Finally, in 1864, he went to England, where he was offered the post of Chief Engineer for a railway company in Madras, India. This meant he could now marry Emily. He told the Binney family about this. In return, he got the following telegraph:



MONCTON NB. NOV. TWENTY NINTH.
FREDERICK L. DIBBLE.
SEVENTY FIVE JERMYN ST. ST. JAMES. LONDON
ENG. MAIL NY.
EMILY LEAVES HALIFAX STEAMER EIGHTH DECEMBER.
MEET HER AT QUEENSTOWN.
STEPHEN BINNEY.

Queenstown is in Ireland, where the trans-Atlantic ships called. Fred mentions this telegraph in one of the letters in this book. When they met, Emily brought Fred the following letter from Fred's mother, still living in Fredericton.

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December 5th

Dear Fred

This, we hope, will be handed to you by Emily. You will then, naturally, be too happy to appreciate letters from your dear old home and other dear ones. When you can be a little more reasonable, you will be glad to know, how happy the good news of your success has made us, and the satisfaction we feel, that Emily will go to share with you the good and bad of this changeable life.

We are all so fond of her, have had such a good opportunity in her long stay with us this summer (so much better chance than when you were monopolising her society) of finding out all her valuable qualities. Your Father was charmed with her. She would be his able assistant on all occasions. and, he thinks, will be able to take the best of care of you. It quite reconciles us to the great distance we are to be separated.

I hope her family thinks as well of it as we do. It will be hard to part from her at any time. Her services to them are so valuable. If she had not got away in this hurry, in hopes to reach you in England, I doubt, if they would have consented to her going as far as India.

The time is very short, but if you get word she is coming, you will have the Blacksmith ready at the nearest point. If not, her friends in England will take good care of her, and send her to you.

Poor thing, she has borne the delay, and your many absences, with the greatest fortitude and resignation, and in this hour of tribulation, is ready to endure all and follow you. I hope it will be in your power to make her as happy as she deserves. I wrote her a long letter but as usual with me, in too much hurry to make it as correct as I could have wished. Tell her I hope she overlooked all the deficiencies. We had scarcely time for anything, but I hope we managed, so what we did forward reached her safely. I could only send what I had in the house. There was no time or choice, or I would have done something better.

It will be some time before we can hear from you, in your new home. God grant, with his help, it may be a happy one. Follow his laws, and trust in him, and you will be satisfied with the lot he has chosen for you. With every good wish for the health and happiness of you both.

Your affectionate Mother, Jane Dibblee

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There was no telegraph line across the Atlantic at this point, so the telegraph would have gone by ship, and there was no time for Fred to reply to it. It sounds as if Emily's family were still opposed, but, as we will see, Emily was a strong woman, and she wanted to marry Fred. The "Blacksmith" must be a joking reference to a Gretna Green marriage, where a run-away couple are married by the blacksmith.

Fred and Emily were married Dec 20, 1864, in London. This meant that Emily became Emily Dibblee (but she named one of her sons Binney). Fred called his wife Emmie, so that is what I will call her.

Leaving the children in England

Fred and Emmie settled in India. They had 8 children, from 1866 to 1876. Unfortunately, three of the children died in India. So Fred and Emmie decided that the children must live in England, for the sake of their health. Emmie, however, remained with her husband in India, and the children would be looked after by a Miss Keeling, who is mentioned in the

letters below. It is hard for us to imagine a father, let alone a mother, behaving in this way, but it was common at the time. It wasn't easy for them, though. Here are extracts from a letter to Emmie by her own mother, about Binney, Fred and Emmie's oldest son:

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Moncton 28th May 1874

My Dearest Emmie

I was grieved to learn, by your letter to Irwine, you were uneasy about dear Binney's health. If you remember, when in India you wrote me, he was either not well, or lazy, as he was so slow in his movements. I then felt worried about him, and fear'd that he had been too long in a hot climate, the darling. ....

I have just heard the Mails will be here tomorrow. I do so hope that there will be a letter from you. I am so very anxious about darling Binney. ...

Sunday - Dearest Emmie, it was such a relief, when Irve brought me your letter of 18th yesterday, to find you writing in such good spirits, and dear little Binney so much better, and you have really heard you are to go back to India again. I hope it will be a long time, dear Emmie, before it is all settled. What you tell me, about dear Binney, made me shed tears, his asking you to stay until he was 8 years old, and his love for you – the darling – was so touching. How you are going to bear it all, poor Child, I do not know. ...

I think I have the smartest, most clever daughters in the world (take it from their dear Father). I sit for hours. alone, thinking, what are they all to me now? When you part from your Children, dear Emmie, you will be able to feel for me, not until then. ...

With love and Kisses to the darlings, dear Child

Always yours, your Affect Mother, Emily Binney

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Irwine (or Irve) was Emmie's brother.

However, Fred and Emmie went back to England on leave from time to time. This is a photo of the whole family in 1881. The children are Binney (sitting on the floor), then left to right, Jeannie, Bessie, Fred (junior), Tom, with Emmie and Fred behind them.

Fred and Emmie in India

There is rather an odd document which shows some light on Fred and Emmie's life in India. Fred was working on a survey for a railway and something happened while they were in camp. This was written up as a funny story, and printed in an Indian paper called 'The Indian Engineer', April 18th 1888 (although the incident happened a lot earlier). I don't know who wrote it. The article is mentioned in one of the letters as the Byle shooting.

The story is phrased in mock Biblical language, which makes some of the references a little obscure. I have glossed some of them (in *italics*). However, it showed that Emmie shared Fred's working life. It's also quite a good story!

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### **Bengal-Nagpur Railway Survey 1881 - Extract from the unofficial Progress Report**

And it came to pass about this time, that as he journeyed, he came to a place which is called Katgora, nigh unto the city of Bilaspur, which is chiefest of the cities, which are in the provinces that are in the midst of the land; he and his wife, and his men-servants, and his maid-servants, and his cattle, among which were many of the tribe of Behemoths, that great beast [*elephant*], for the carrying of his tents and of his goods. Certain young men were also with him, that were called 'the boys', who had come from the hill called Cooper's [*Civil Engineering college, in Surrey*]. There were also with him six fighting men of valour of the army of the country, men of a dark complexion withal, and a centurion was in command of the fighting men.

And it came to pass, that as he was sitting by the door of his tent, about the going down of the sun, and his wife and the young men, even the boys, behold there stood before him the centurion that commanded the six fighting men that were with him, and made obeisance unto him. Now this centurion was a mighty man and a valiant hunter; for it was known unto all men, that when at one time, a wild beast, even a bear, had passed nigh unto the tents, he had gone for that wild beast, a staff only being in his hand, and had put him to flight. So his master harkened unto the words of the centurion, and he opened his mouth and said "Let not my lord be angry, but hear what thy servant speaketh". And he answered and said unto him "Say on". And he said: "The women of this city have besought me, saying, The wild beasts that are in this land do increase and multiply mightily, and do eat of our corn and the fruit of our trees, and do climb up into our high trees, even our Mohur trees [*Durians?*], and do eat the fruit thereof, and the same fruit is an exceeding pleasant fruit, sweet even as the sweetness of honey unto the lips, but stinking in the nostrils of him that doeth eat thereof. From this fruit cometh also a wine even a strong wine that maketh glad our hearts. Wherefore we pray thee, speak unto my lord that he may make ready his sword and his mighty spear, and his other weapon wherefrom there cometh that great and terrible voice [*gun*]. And thus it will come to pass that he will smite the old beasts and we will live and not die, we and our little ones. Wherefore, my lord, be thou ready, and when the wild beasts draw near at

night unto the Mohur trees, thy servant will make bold to tell thee of this thing." Then his master arose and cried with a loud voice unto the centurion. "Thou hast well said and it shall be even as thou hast spoken". Then he called unto him a servant and commanded him saying: "Bring me, I pray thee of the wine that is pressed in the island that is in the west, from the corn that is called barley [*whisky*]" and he brought it. Then he and the young men that were with him, even the boys, drank of the wine of the barley, mixed with water, and they refreshed their souls withal.

But his wife that was in the tent, hearing the words of the centurion, rejoiced greatly in her heart, and leapt for joy and smote her hands together and said within herself "When my husband is sleeping with an exceeding heavy sleep, as his manner is, then will I arise and make ready his sword and his spear and his weapon with the great and terrible voice that smiteth from afar, farther than the arrow of the bowmen that are in this land. I will make ready also his shoes for his feet and his coat of strange and divers colours that he weareth in the morning [*dressing gown*?]. Then I will awake my lord and put his weapon into his hand, and he will arise and smite the wild beasts that eat of the fruit of the land and his soul will rejoice."

Now the woman was not at all afraid, for so it was aforetime, that very early in the morning, as they were journeying, before it was yet day, she was alone, for the others were with the tents that were bound upon the back of Behemoth, half a day's journey behind her. And she had gone on before them to prepare a place where they should pitch their tents, and behold there came out, and met her upon the way, a mighty bear of a black and terrible countenance, and her visage did not change at all, neither was she afraid, but pursued that wild beast even into the wilderness; and now she said within herself, "Peradventure he shall come again." And it came to pass, that when they had drunk of the wine and of the water, that the man-servant had brought unto them, her lord, and the young men that were with him, arose up and departed, every man unto his own tent, for it was night. But the centurion slept not.

And lo, in the darkness of the night, the centurion came softly unto the door of his lord's tent, and in a still small voice spake and said: "Master, Master, Baloo, Baloo! [*bear*]" Then his wife, hearing the words of the centurion, arose in haste, and woke her lord. And he awoke and got him to his feet, and walked even as one in a sleep walketh when he dreameth, for his eyes were heavy. Then she gaveth him his weapon into his hand, and he took it unwittingly and in great haste. Then she led him to the door of the tent, and put his feet into his shoes and his coat of divers colours upon his back.

And she opened the door of the tent, and behold in the darkness of the night, three great she-bears out of the wood had come nigh unto the tents, and were eating of the fruit of the mohur trees that had fallen on to the ground, and there was a sound even as the sound of feeding, and a breathing through the nostrils withal. Then she, being behind him even at the door of the tent, pointed the weapon that was in the hands of her husband, and cried with a soft voice and said "Smite them! Smite them!" Then he, being heavy with sleep and holding the weapon unwittingly, drew at a venture and shot one of the beasts.

But seeing that the other two wild beasts departed not thence, neither feared the voice of the weapon that was in the hands of her lord, the woman marvelled greatly, and cried again unto her husband "Smite! Smite!." And he, being by this time awakened out of his sleep, smote yet another wild beast from afar, even from the door of the tent. But the third beast, that was with them that were smitten, went thence not at all, nor fled away, but remained. So she cried again unto her husband, "It is well, my lord, but smite again, I pray thee, lest peradventure this wild beast, that still liveth, be that same great bear with a black and terrible countenance, that met me sometime upon the way, and that I pursued into the wilderness."

Then he smote again a third time, even as his wife commanded him and lo! there arose a great and bitter cry from the beast that had been smitten, for it was not yet slain. And he said within himself: "Behold, it is a dream and I am not awakened out of my sleep, for verily aforetime I heard not the cry of a bear like unto this bear". And he arose and went out quickly, and looked upon the carcasses of the beasts that had been slain, and lo! they were red and black, and their tails were long, and not after the manner of bears, which have short tails. And he covered his face for he was ashamed.

And it came to pass, that the centurion had followed him to see the thing that was done, and the six fighting men, and all the men servants, and Dyal Chaunder, the scribe, and the six young men that were with him, even the boys. And they brought torches, for it was night. And when they came unto the carcasses of the beasts that had been slain, they looked into one another's faces, and were silent for the space of one hour. But the lord, being ashamed, beheld no man's face but turned and went into his tent. For they were kine [cows].

And soon there arose a great sound of laughter from the tent of the young men, even the boys. But, from the tent of the hunter that had slain the kine, was heard the voice of only one that laughed, and the laughter was even as the laughter of a woman, and not of a man. And she smote her hands together, but her lord laughed not at all, for he was ashamed. And from the tent of Dyal Chaunder the scribe, and, from the tent under which slept the centurion, was heard no laughter at all, for they said within themselves: "Our master hath slain three kine that are holy kine and sacred, now therefore our faces are blackened, before the people of this land." And they wept sore.

And it came to pass, that they all rose up very early in the morning, before it was day and got them from thence with haste, lest peradventure, the people of the city should revile them. And they came into the city of Bilaspore, where in those days, there resided a publican, who was also a man of war, but whose name was even the name of a Pharisee, and not of a publican [*obscure - the only named Pharisee in the Gospels is Nicodemus*]. But Dyal Ghaunder, the scribe, tarried behind with the kine that had been slain, for the wife of his lord had besought him, saying "Suffer not, I pray thee, the report of the thing that hath been done, to follow us into the city of the publican, who is also a man of war." And she gave him certain pieces of silver, wherewithal to appease the wrath of those that possessed the kine. And he came unto her at evening and said. "For ten

pieces of silver, current money with the merchant, have I appeased the wrath of them that possessed the kine;" and she said "Thou hast done well."

And they departed thence, and journeyed many days, and came into a city which is called The City of a Thousand Gardens [*Hazaribagh*] and they dwelt there. And they wot not, that it was known what manner of thing had been done. But the noise thereof spread abroad throughout the land, so they tarried there for the space of but two months, and being ashamed by reason of the laughter of the young men, even the boys, and of the long man who has writ this, whose laughter was turned into weeping, until he was like to die, he that had slain the kine, and his wife, and his manservants, and his maidservants, departed thence and went into a far country and there abide even unto the present day.

And the other works of this mighty hunter and his name (F.L.Dibblee Ex. Eng.) and all that he did, and the highway that he found for the King [*? Victoria was Queen!*], are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Public Works Department?

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However, this shared life could not continue. Their children were growing up in England, so they decided that, while Fred had to continue working in India, Emmie should return to England permanently, to look after the children and the education of the boys. So there was one last leave together in England, and Fred set sail back to India, in October 1885. This is the beginning of this sequence of letters. They are mostly written to his wife, Emmie, with a few written to his two oldest boys. There are two other letters, which are described later.

The letters written by Fred are hand-written, on thin paper (to save weight, and so postage costs) and often faded. The letters can be hard to decipher, and I may have made mistakes, especially in names. Fred used no paragraphs, presumably because this would waste valuable space. He also tended to write in a "stream of consciousness", with little punctuation or capital letters. I have added punctuation and paragraphs to make it easier to read and understand. I am sorry if I have added an excess of commas, but some of his sentence structures are complicated, and this helps to disentangle them!

In these letters, breakfast is not the first meal of the day. It is eaten after the morning's work, perhaps at midday. Since India and Burma are often very hot, people get up early to work while it's cooler. Fred sometimes talks of a "Europe morning", where he gets up later, usually to make himself take things quieter for a day.

Fred uses some Indian vocabulary in his letters. Emmie had been in India too, and would have understood this. I have put these in *italics*, and given their meaning at the end of this book. There is also a description of the places he mentions.

Benares Cuttack Puri Railway survey

S.S.Malwa 13th Oct 85 - 3 days from Suez

Emmie darling,

To prevent you being cheated out of your full share of letter, I need to make a beginning today, and have it ready against our arrival in Aden. There was a difficulty about stamps at Suez (none to be had), or I should have given you another letter by the last mail, but there really would have been little more than the fact of my having survived two days more to tell you.

We were awfully sad arriving at Port Said. The "Malwa", our steamer, had gone onto Suez through the Canal, so we passengers and all the mails had to be loaded into the "Australia" to be again transferred into the "Malwa", when we got through the Canal & that was the worst. They took so long over it on the first day, we only did 14 miles of the Canal journey, and it took most of 3 days to get through to Suez. It seemed they had some cargo from Suez which required to be unloaded before "Brindisi" passengers went on board, as we put the ship in quarantine. The result is we are now 1½ days late and I shall probably lose 2 days pay when I get to Bombay.

As you may suppose, we crowded up the "Australia" pretty well - 70 passengers more than the proper number for whom food and accommodation had been provided. It was very pleasant however because the ship was so nice & clean & cabins so large. There were two others in a 3 berth cabin with me but we got on capitally from their being gentlemen, used to consider others & who knew how to travel. On the other ship I had two whalers who seemed only to think of their own comfort & convenience. They never thought of going out to give me a chance to dress or pack up & I used to fancy that they lay in wait for me. When I wanted to go into the cabin they all came too. If it had continued much longer I should have had to undertake their education.

This ship is very comfortable. Cabins are very roomy & there are not too many people on board. All the Calcutta China & Australian passengers being taken out, we have only about 115 or 120 left who are going to Bombay. I expected the ship to be awfully crowded.

There are a whole lot of nice sensible people that I can talk to on nonfrivolous subjects. That Col Waterhouse who went *home* with us, Col Trevor, brother of the general I went to see, a Doctor Garden who knows everyone almost that I know - a Sir xxx (something or other) Chief Justice of Allahabad who is an awfully nice fellow. There are also plenty to do the joking business. I must tell you about Mrs Brooke - You remember the tall straight young Dr who went *home* with us. Well, his wife is a fine lump of a girl entirely, as tall as he is, very nearly & with, I should say, a fine constitution - not pretty but very good tempered, looking like Nora Creena who made the stir from Cork along to Skibbereena.

Subsequent sheet/s are missing.

From the Dublin Comic Songster, 1841:

*Oh, who are you that walks this way,
So like the Empress Ejemeira,
Or is it true what people say,
That you're the famous Sheil ne Geira?
Or are you the great Pompey?
Or Britain's queen, bould Tilburina?
Or are you Dido or Doctor M'Gee?
Oh no, says she, I'm Nora Creina.
I am her that makes the stir
From Cork along to Skibbereena,
Where night and day they drink strong tay,
And whiskey too, says Nora Creina.*

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*This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date around early Nov 85*

*sheet/s missing*

...the life in English climate, and the pleasure of being with and taking care of our children will do your health good, but you must remember, after so many years in India, and all you have gone through, will make you not so fit for hard labour as you used to be in old times. You have some pleasure & seeing friends is good for you, but don't, darling, work yourself to death with them or for them.

Now for you, one or two questions. I wrote to Ross a long while ago and asked him for his address & what the amount owing him was. I am very glad I did not make a guess & send him something on chance of being right, because the letter does not appear to have reached. There is no answer. I will write again. Post Office Ootacamund seems too indefinite to address a letter with a cheque in it. Meanwhile I am keeping open my a/c with Arbuthnot in Madras so that I may leave funds there to pay him with.

I have the money from Vincent (as I think I must have written in a former letter) for the dessert service. He was a long time sending it, but it came at last, & two days ago I had a letter from him, in reply to mine sent when P.O. order was received. He gives quite a lot of news, tells me to say you owe him a letter & sends best remembrances (beastly word but I suppose does not like to say "kind regards" except in direct correspondence).

He says, for news, Groces have gone to Madras only for a time. Old residents of Nellore still there are Campbells, Henderson, Sullivan and himself. Soda water Machine is still working away but wants supervision such as it had before. They sometimes got dirty water & little gas. He (Vincent) started there about Xmas time, public tennis courts got donations of 900/-. There are three courts and a stud East of Sullivans and North of (some name illegible) it must be on left of road (towards the Knapps) as you drive from corner of Groce compounds towards where that native Shurstadue lived (you remember having driven in there & saw his wives). He hopes to get the library reading room up

there too, says "every one dislikes the present library arrangements". He does not say that the Campbells are in Nellore, & it is not likely they are back from leave. I have not heard definitely but they must have gone *home*, & must be there now I should think. He (Campbell) paid money to Arbuthnot for me on 21st April & I suspect that was done just before or when he took his leave, so he can not be expected back till near end of July. To judge from the time Parker took in going *home*, you ought to hear of the Campbells' arrival the week after date of your letter.

I have looked up Mullaly in the P.W.D. list & find there are two - one Ex Army 12 years standing in Canals Punjab - the other a young Lieutenant R.E. in Military ...  
*sheet/s missing*

*A lot of chatter about people he used to work with or know. We meet Campbell in the next letter (and the soda water machine!)*

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This type-written letter was written to Fred by his friend Campbell.

Nellore 1st. Nov. 85.

Dear Dibblee

as you do not appreciate my caligraphy you shall not be treated to it but shall have type-writer & consequent misspellings.

Talking of type-writers, reminds me that Downie has been telling me of one that he has seen worked in America by a friend who is also an editor & who writes his leading articles by its agency. It seems to be a cross in size between this one & a Remington. According to his account it has keys like the latter. That must be a great improvement on this which one cannot work fast so long as one has such miserable little holes into which to insert the pointer.

So after all my prognostications & not yours as to this railway are correct. I said you would be back just at the time operations recommenced. And so you are. I telegraphed the fact up to you to Watson but received word that you had left & destination unknown. I said they might deliver to King & Co but this they declined unless I paid another telegram charge which under the circumstances seemed needless. No one has arrived yet but Lambert writing on the 25th. ult. to Grose spoke of sending an assistant very shortly. I hope when he does come he will allow the sodawater machine to remain on his premises. I will let it be known that your share is for sale; if no one will buy it I will do so myself.

My wife and I are exceedingly obliged to you & Mrs D, for troubling to go to Wimbledon & see our little girl. We were particularly glad that as strangers to both parties you should have been persuaded of the good terms she is on with Mrs Bowman.

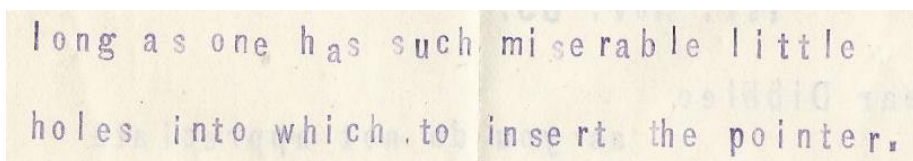
I sent the bill of lading from H & T to Messrs A & Co who only assured me on the 12th ult. that they had received no such cases. Now they seem to be better informed. Another piece of news in my telegram to you was that I have recovered your snipe-stick. Henderson is having it copied for me & I will send the original when you say whither away.

It was "H" who got the pattern of your chair made. We have received the parcel. Many thanks. Yes, I forgot to deduct 11Rs, Five for N. Naidu & 6 for feeding etc. the "gee". Old McCosh lives next door now. I often see the beast and he looks famous. All the men save Webster have at last come in but the Monsoon has not reached us yet. Hoping you have some decent digging & with our united kind regards

believe me yours sincerely, La Campbell

The account of the type-writer used is interesting. It sounds like an index typewriter.

From Wikipedia: "Coming into the market in the early 1880s, the index typewriter uses a pointer or stylus to choose a letter from an index. The pointer is mechanically linked so that the letter chosen could then be printed, most often by the activation of a lever."



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19th 11/85 Camp Urmangre

41 miles from Hazaribagh, 15 miles to Ranchi

Emmie darling

Tomorrow we expect to reach Ranchi & I must get letters away from there so as to make sure of not missing a mail. Sunday is, I think, the last day for posting (this is Thursday) but there will be the distance of our march behind us to come back, so I will make ready to post at Ranchi & then we shall see when we are likely to get a safe posting town again, but you should not be unhappy if a mail should be missed. I told Parker when coming away to write & say I had got off safely, & would probably miss a mail on the march. He said he would be writing to Minnie, & she will have the pleasure of giving the message, & this will give you the pleasure of being before her.

I got off on the day intended, though I confess to being a little late in starting the first morning, having a lot of unpacking and repacking to do before my goods could be made safe for the campaign, & to see that the proper things are left behind. There have been some regrets because some things were not brought, but they are not necessary, and I am rather proud of my performance in the packing line, for one who has been of late so "badly brought" up for that duty, & whose education has been neglected by those having charge of it. I consider that I must have great natural talents to enable me to recover from such neglect.

I have two very fair servants who seem to understand camping business, & I have been looking after them pretty well, & hope soon to get them in such habits that they will make me comfortable. I have a *kitmutgar* (Mitthro by name) and a *Bearer* (Bahadra by name) who, I think, are very good, tho the Cook, I fear, is rather a duffer at helping me when I arrive after the march and want a bath, but he cooks jungal food fairly

well. The arrangement at present is: Hawkes' people find breakfast and afternoon tea, and mine give dinner and *chota hazri*. My cook goes on ahead with the camp to help when I get in, while *Bearer* & *Mitthro* stop till morning to give *chota hazri* and pack up the night things.

We are making what we have called long marches, 15, 16 & 14 miles, as the roads are good, but later on there will be no roads at all, but the Earth's crust in its natural state, & there we can not go so fast. We are using carts supplemented by 4 elephants, and there is said to be one place so bad that the elephants will have to carry every thing over leaving the carts empty, and go back & forth till the job is done, but after that place, it is supposed to be better and we can use carts again.

Carts are little things, and bullocks are weak, but they are so much cheaper than elephants, that if the latter can go at all, they are preferable. We calculated this morning that the cost of an elephant per month, considering what he takes to eat, and allowing a fair amount to repay his value, & the chance of his dying, it comes to Rs 56/- a month, whereas a cart which will generally carry just as much load, only costs Rs 15/- a month. The difference is rather startling.

I have been writing to Francis in the interval of this. It is now Friday and I am in camp opposite the Commissioner's gate in the place where Mr Ramsay was camped, do you remember? I was reminded of you, darling, on the Road up & I could call to mind many of the places which we passed 6½ years ago, when we went to Hazaribagh in the dog-cart. I was a little hazy about some places because of the different style of travel. I could not exactly fix the spot where we went after the bird of paradise. I thought of it, but there were no birds of paradise, nor any of the associations.

The weather has been lovely and I could not help thinking what a nice pleasant time we should have had if you had only been here. Oh dear!! I do not find Mr Hawkes a sufficient substitute. There is one thing which must be said regarding him, jokes go a very long way. They generally have to be repeated three times before they are taken in, so each lasts a long time, and generally there is a discussion afterwards as to whether there was any joke at all, which sometimes ends in a feeling of depression.

We have just had a conflict with two *Pathans* who have brought *kismis*, wallnuts, promotion nuts & apricots & it has ended in purchase at double the proper value. I purchased also a cane chair. Tis evident I ought not to be trusted alone.

The Commissioner (a Mr Stevens, Bengal C Service) is expected to be out, & Major Lillingston is also out, thereat I rejoice. I must call, and some of them might ask me to dinner which I abhor. I must also call on Mrs Swan. They are still here, & I met him in Hazaribagh. From what I remember, they are not likely to give invitation. Mrs Lillingston and Mrs Barrow will probably be seen (Mrs B by the way ought to be in retirement as a little B is expected next month, but that does not make much difference to some people sometimes).

There is great trouble outside with the *Pathans*. An intelligent *baboo* is looking after my interests, & apparently they require looking after. The intention just now was to

weigh the apricots & nuts with lumps of stone made for the purpose of selling by, & objection has been taken to it.

I saw a white man drive past in a dogcart just now. Inquiry was evidently made from the servants as to "Who the Sahib is?" but he passed by on the other side after ascertaining. I don't grieve.

I believe that I have nearly come to the end of my paper, 4 sheets being the allowance so I think I won't write any more now, leaving a little space for Mrs Lillingston & Mrs Swan to send their kind regards.

Tis Saturday morning, & I think it is safe to finish this now, or peradventure something might turn up to prevent my writing again. Your letter this week has not reached me. The mail has been delayed somewhere & won't reach Hazaribagh till tonight and then probably there'll be a day's delay in readdressing & forwarding it.

I saw Dr. Swan this morning in my walk. I contemplate a visit there, & perhaps may do the Club in the evening. Mackay the young red faced civilian, who was here when we were (do you remember?) is here now, has got a wife and a household, but I think a visit there will be too much for me on this occasion.

My love to the Boys when you write, and to the little ones at home, & with lots to yourself my darling,

Ever your own Fred

*Frederick Dibblee is engaged on the Benares Cuttack Puri Railway survey. Hawkes is his assistant. Fred's wife, Emmie, used to travel with him, and obviously sorted out the packing and arrangements.*

*Promotion nuts are cashews. Wallnuts is Fred's spelling!*

*Fred seems to have a low opinion of socialising! Remember he was Canadian born and educated, and he may have felt a little ill at ease with the British. Or perhaps they were just boring! "Bengal C Service" is Bengal Civil Service.*

*Fred and Emmie's two oldest sons, Binney and Fred junior, are at boarding school. The other three children, Jeannie, Bessie and Tom, are at home.*

~~~~~

Camp via Sumbalpure C. Prov.

40 miles from Ranchi Bengal - 25th Nov.

Emmie darling

It is only 3 days since I wrote my last weekly letter, & there is not much to say but we are at a post office in this camp, and by next we probably shall be far away.

I rec. yours of the 29th Oct, with one from Binney and from Fred, after I got out away from Randi. The steamer was late and mails did not reach Hazaribagh till 4 days after the proper date. Up to now, there ought not to have been any break in my weekly letters, but don't worry if it happens now, as these lazy beings of *dâk* runners are very uncertain, & delays & possibly loss of letters may occur.

The road we are travelling by is not the same as we travelled by, when we made one march together in 81. We are going much more direct to the south, and there is not,

so far, nearly so much jungal, and we have kept almost entirely in British Territory. There have been no visits from Rajahs and Princes that used to be such a horror to you, but on the other hand no one seems to care for us much and we have no Head of Police. Do you remember the old fellow belonging to Jushpore, who did so much and arranged *shikar* parties "bean feasts" etc.

I have been doing pretty well, considering that I am left without any wife to guide me. I get up at 5.30, sometimes 5.15 am, and our usual time for arriving in camp is about 10. This morning we were earlier. The camp, on the elephants and carts, generally starts at 2 in the morning. We stop punctually our operation in the dining tent at 9pm, & then tents are struck and packed, but the loading of elephants begins only about 2.

Shortly the road is expected to be very bad, and the moon is waning, so I fear they will have to march wholly by daylight. It will not increase our comfort, but can't be helped, and, as far is known now, will only last for three marches. 100 men extra had to be hired by the party ahead of us, to get the carts over the road (I should say, over the country as there is no road).

This is now Thursday the 26th, and we have had such a short march, and got up so early, that there is a whole hour to spare before breakfast, & that I am going to devote to you. It has been such a lovely morning, colder than any we have had yet. We felt the necessity for more clothes, but, having put them on, the feeling was one of being awfully jolly, & we started off to walk, so as to enjoy it fully. We felt so fit, that I found I had walked nearly 5 miles and got up to the change of pony, before we thought of mounting. We are at the end of our road & tomorrow will be a troublous time for the cartmen, and there will be breakages & possible reproaches, but, further than that, we (the *Sahibs*) will have an easy time of it. Only a 6 mile march. I have not seen a living thing that could be shot with advantage. One partridge in a field and three in cages were seen on other side of

...

sheet/s missing

They are obviously timing their marches for the cool of the day, early morning.

Presumably they are sleeping in the heat of the day. When the journey is difficult, the carts and elephants have a hard time, but the "Sahibs" have a shorter march.

Shooting was a hobby of Fred's, like many of his contemporaries. However, it was partly for the pot.

~~~~~

Camp Agranin (near Sumbalpore C.P.) - 26 Nov 1885

Dear Binney

I received yours and Fred's letters by last mail and they pleased me very much. I had got a long way into India, as you wrote you expected I would be, several thousand miles from where Mother and I were before (Nellor). I am now again with Mr Parker, but not working in quite the same country. Hazaribagh is the headquarters, & when the hot weather comes on again, we shall go back there, but it is a long way from where the work, my share of it, actually is.

My journey, that I am on now, is 200 miles, &, at the rate of travel, it takes just as long as it does to go to London. We can only average about 12 to 10 miles a day. The business of finding food for the whole company is rather an undertaking, as everything has to be collected and made ready, before our arrival at each camping place. There are four elephants, 7 horses & ponies, 24 bullocks and 140 men to be provided with food, nothing at all being carried except the *Sahibs'* food and drink and grain for our horses. All the rest is to be found and collected on the spot.

We are having delightful weather, as cold and bracing as it was in England when I left. It is not really so cold, but it feels so, and we have to wear thick clothing, but the bracing part of it is more so. The air this morning was so nice & sharp & clear, that we started to walk, & kept on for nearly 5 miles before we thought of mounting.

We expect to have dreadful trouble tomorrow. The road has disappeared, as we are just on the borders of two separate Provinces, Bengal and the Central Provinces, and there is very little communication through. All traffic goes through the centres of trade in opposite directions, our side towards Bombay, and the other towards Calcutta. Consequently, when there is a rough piece of country so situated, it is left without roads. We expect to have many plates, cups & bottles broken.

Your Mother will have told you, all that is settled about your going up for the Indian Civil Exam. Mother was right in what was first proposed in her letter to Mr Ash, but it is evident Mr A did not understand what was in my mind, although I thought he did. It is all settled now, & considering all things, the arrangement come to is for the best, & I feel certain Mr Ash takes a great interest in you, and will do his utmost to help you out, & make your efforts successful, so, if you are diligent, I can see no reason for failure. So, to Mr Ash explain any difficulty you may meet with, & I feel sure you will get his help.

Tell Fred with my love, that I was much pleased with his letter, & want him to write frequently. I will not be able to write to him this time but he shall not be neglected. Your Mother will always tell you about me, and as I have time, you shall both have letters. Now with my best love, & with most sanguine hopes of your success

Believe me Your afftn. Father F.L.Dibblee.

*(George) Binney Dibblee was Fred's oldest surviving son, born 1868. So he would have been about 17 years old when he got this letter. His younger brother was also called Fred - I will refer to him as Fred junior when necessary.*

*The Indian Civil Service was a prestigious job, and there was a tough entrance exam. Mr Ash is a teacher at Binney's school, Haileybury. There will be a lot more in these letters about this exam. I suspect Fred (senior) didn't know much about careers in England, as he was Canadian, and had not spent much in England. Talking to people in India, he would learn about the Indian Civil Service. Another point is that Fred was not well off. Education costs money. It was necessary, in order to get a good job, but he wanted to focus the boys' minds on their future possible careers, and not waste money!*

~~~~~


Camp via Sumbulpore - 2 Dec 1885

Emmie darling

A short march today. Only 8 miles, got into camp before 10, & now breakfast is over, the filter is at work, and the people are all settled down with their food & to rest. I have written some documents, & now I am going in for this.

Tis not by any means certain that you will get it in due course, as we are scarcely within reach of a post office, and it is only 7 days ahead of the proper posting time at Ranchi. In a week hence, we shall be "within touch" of Sumbulpore Post Office, & can hope for more satisfactory correspondence arrangement. We have had no newspapers for four days now, nor official letters. This latter does not grieve, but we miss the papers, as the Burma expedition is getting interesting. They ought to have taken Mandalay (the capital) by this time, & either killed or captured Thibaw, and we are anxious to know. I am getting fidgety about your letter too, darling, although I know, of course, there has been no chance of getting it earlier. It would have been with me, from the post office, last post probably, if it had not been for delay in readdressing so many times.

This has been rather a rough time for the camp, especially the bullocks, as the last three days, one very bad pass had to be crossed without the ghost of a road, & we required over 50 men to lift and carry the carts over some of the places, and besides that, the marches have been long for this country, 14 & 16 miles. The *babus* implored me to halt today on the plea of bullocks being tired, but the real reason was they were hungry and down in their luck yesterday afternoon. When they asked, bullocks were brought up for inspection, & only 3 very tired brutes could be produced. So I cured the difficulty by ordering "Sajars" (those jungly carts with solid wheels, that they use for carrying wood & stone on - you know them!) to be employed, and the hire to be deducted from the cartmen's wages. That I think has cured most of the bullocks.

I have been writing to Fred, & it just occurred to me that Xmas times will have begun by the time this reaches, & you will have all the children with you. How I wish I could be there too! I hope you may all have a merry, happy time. It was in contemplation to get some Xmas cards at Calcutta, where I expected to go at one time, but that did not come off. They are not things you can write for by post, & let the shops select for you.

I am writing to King, Bombay to send some money. It will be £80 which is nearly the balance in their hands. The *bandobust* of sundries from Calcutta cannot come off just yet, as the Examiner has not as yet audited my salary bill, & I cannot pay myself any money. Do not forget to let me know what your expenses are & likely to be, including school bills, so I may know how to arrange and what I am likely to save.

I am expecting Mr Parker to come along my way in about 3 weeks. He was to start today from Hazaribagh and ought to catch up my camp around Xmas time. We will probably manage to have a little jollity but the mirth will probably not be overpowering.

You can not conceive a more peaceful scene than there is outside my tent door. All the people had a short march, got in early, and are now going in for repose. We are in a glorious tope of Mangoes over 60 feet high and only a little patch here & there of

sunshine can get through. The sun is bright enough outside, I can tell you. I have just become the possessor of a goat & two kids, & they cost me R 1/8. The milk this morning looked like weak coffee. What the colouring matter was, I did not inquire about, but I don't want any more of that kind. One of the *buchchas* is to be appropriated for butcher's meat, & I think the effect will be to give us more milk. Is that right?

Mitthro has just brought in his bill for meat from 21st to 31st (sic) Nov. I fear there has been some *banao* about that. I cannot remember having eaten anything on the 31st Nov. The items are generally Hens 4 - 4 *annas*, Eggs a dozen - 2 *annas*. The prices are not large, certainly, but neither were the "Hens" or the eggs.

Mr Hawkes & I change about every four days or so. For one period his men go on in the night & get breakfast, while my man gives *chota hazri* &, then gets forward in time to get dinner. We have a first rate *bandabast* for bringing on the kit that is left in the night. One of the elephants, "Fit", stops behind & brings the whole lot, and she is so fast that it very seldom happens, that it is after 12 before I have my sleeping tent pitched again and ready at the new camp.

I have some business letters to write, and want to get all ready for the man to start off with, to distant post town. All must be got ready tonight, and if we are lucky, the day after tomorrow ought to bring us letters, & papers. Now with my best love to you and all, my darling & with the wish that you may all have a very happy Xmas.

Believe me - Ever your own Fred

Fred is on the move, and has left instructions that his letters (and newspapers) are to be redirected and sent on to him. He has to send a runner with his letters to the nearest post office. Letters leave the main post office for England probably once a week, and it would be easy to miss this. All this obviously disrupts his correspondence with his family.

Thibaw Min (1859-1916) was the last king of the Konbaung Dynasty of Burma (Myanmar). His reign ended when Burma was defeated by the forces of the British Empire in the Third Anglo-Burmese War, on 29 November 1885, prior to its official annexation on 1 January 1886. Fred ends up working in Mandalay - see future letters. Fred is being sardonic about Nov 31st. That date doesn't exist!

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Camp "Sugra" Central Prov. India - 2nd Dec 85

Dear Fred

It is your turn this time to have a letter, although I fear you will fare badly, as there is not much of interest occurring within my reach just now. I march with the camp, 28 miles on one day, & 14 on another, & each day the ground seems worse than any road I ever saw, but there is little other variation. I forgot, by the way, we have had rumours of game at rare intervals, but these rumours only are told us at the same time that we are assured, that there is not the least possible chance of getting a chance of shooting any thing. I believe that the orders hereabouts are to keep everything for the Rajah's shooting. The rumours I speak of are: a few days ago, they reported that marks of a tiger had been seen on the roadside. On inspecting the place, sure enough, there was the print on the

road dust, of some soft kind of beast having laid down, and hairs were lying on the place. Two long ones are herewith. We could not find out which way the animal went, or whence he came, as the prints of his feet on the road were all obliterated before I got up. Further, there was no report among the people of any thing having been killed, & there was not the least chance of our getting a shot. A man had been killed a short time ago, at a place 18 miles away, but they had killed the tiger also, subsequently, so there was no sport to be got out of that for us. This morning, they reported that there are wild elephants about. In the village 200 yards from any tent, a man was killed by them, a few days ago. I am trying to learn something more about them. There would be a fair scrimmage, if they came to our camp at night, and got into an altercation with our tame elephants! That is unlikely however, as wild elephants are always very shy. Unless, of course, they happen to take a fancy to smash people, when their diffidence quite disappears.

I am very much pleased at the good account you gave of what you were doing at your lessons. I wish you every success, my boy. I hope you may get the prizes. If you keep on as you have begun, we shall be very proud of you. Quite right to distinguish yourself at Football too. The rule should be: beat the other fellows in everything you do. Give my love to Binney. I wrote to him last week. This, by the way, will reach you during the Xmas holidays. There are no cards or anything of that kind to be found in these Jungals that I could send but I dare say with Mother at home you will have a jolly time of it. I wish you and all very many happy returns of a very merry Xmas.

I have just heard more about the Elephant. He killed the man, sure enough and they shot him (the E) in the head but did not bag him.

With lots of love - your affectionate Father, F.L.Dibblee

*This letter was written to Frederick Dibblee (junior), Fred's second son, born 1872. So he would have been about 13 years old when he got this letter.*

~~~~~

Camp via Sumbalpoore (15 miles distant) C.P. - 7 Dec 1885

Emmie darling

We have a day off field work today, to which various circumstances have contributed to bring about. 1° Parker has written to say I am on the wrong route, & we wait for his arrival & decision as to going back or not. 2° there are a lot of plotting arrears required to make the work complete as we go on. 3° we are going to *shikar* in jungal this afternoon, and don't want line clearing to go on. All the people, Hawkes included, are busy at tent door, doing their duty to Govt, while I am writing this. My conscience is easy, because they are not wasting their valuable time.

I am sending in to Sumbalpoore for cash, on a *Hathi*, and I hasten with this, to send in by same opportunity, fearing to trust it to the last day, when Parker will be with me & talking without ceasing on business etc. It would have been great value, if I could put it off, & tell of all the game after the beat is o'er, but we must leave that for next time.

They report this as a very good place and there certainly is abundance of tracks to be seen in the river close by where the *janwar* come for water and feed. Yesterday I

saw fresh tracks of *sambhur*, small deer, pig, wolves. A few days ago the Dty Commissioner & all the whites of Sambalpore Station were out *shikarring* in this place, & the report is (probably untrue from the simple fact of being stated) that a tiger came out but no one hit him, a leopard came out and was shot by a Memsahib, and bagged too a *sambhur* (big horned *wallah*) and some small deer. Now whatever truth there may or not be in all that, there undoubtedly are lots of *janwars* in the jungle and we may see some. There is no hesitation on my part as to taking time for *shikar*, we have worked every day since the beginning, except on one rainy Sunday, and I consider we have to our credit full Xmas holidays, plus all the Sundays since starting.

Parker is close at hand now, & intends marching towards us tomorrow from Sumbalpore, & I am trying to persuade him to come an extra 4 miles to this camp to breakfast. Tis only 14 miles, & a good road so I hope he may come. We have such a lot to settle and he, I know, is awfully wanting to talk to me about his affairs at home. He wrote me a long letter about his boys, & says he will go "home" immediately he gets back to Hazaribagh. Better not let it be known just yet, as he may change his mind. His last accounts of Harry are, that he suffers from "acute mania" which means "madness" and unless there is news of a very favorable change, I should think he would certainly go. Again he does not want to go if there was no necessity. Poor Parker. The misfortunes and want of success of his boys are a ...

Subsequent sheet/s are missing

Parker is Fred's immediate boss at the moment. He is also a friend, and his family are in England, like Fred's family.

~~~~~

Camp via Sumbulpore, Central Province, 11 Dec 1885

Emmie darling

There is just a chance of my catching the next English mail from Sumbulpore. We are 22 miles from the place but there is a post office four miles from us which I shall reach tomorrow by sending a messenger in, & letters should get to Sumbulpore tomorrow night (Saturday). The English mail goes from there Sunday.

I don't feel very brilliant, as we have pretty hard work and my wit is pretty well worn out. I got your two letters of the 5th & 12th Nov this morning, after a long interval, and I have been so interested in reading, & delighted that you were all getting on so well, that the impulse to write is irresistible. I was so full of you and your doings that my usual nap (after 1.30 breakfast) was an utter failure. I could not sleep a wink, but had a sort of waking dream thinking of all you wrote.

Old Hawkes is also tremendously busy writing to his wife. He writes once a day, and lately he has been upbraided for not writing enough, & this mail has to take away several letters. He has just come in to me, & borrowed the weighing machine which proved too small to weigh the document.

I must thank you very much, darling, for being so good at writing, & Jeannie too must be thanked. I do like to hear what you send me. Every word that you can write will

be a comfort to me. Tis terribly lonely work being out here in the wilderness, with only an inoffensive man like Poor Hawkes for companionship. I have little really to complain of beyond the above named grievance of being without you darling. I am wonderfully well, & fit for my work and take an interest in it.

The weather has been delightful so far, & if we don't get rain, our work will get along swimmingly. This is the third day, since we really got a start, and I have about 8 miles of line settled, including a big Bridge. Our marching is very easy business. Every second day, we move forward about four to 6 miles, & that leaves the people lots of time to get the camp pitched and settled, before we get in for breakfast, and don't I eat a breakfast just.

We have been having some shooting too, from the camp where our long journey ended, near to where the work began. A tank was found in that country, with lots of duck, and a second with a few on it. We got some out of the far tank, & then got so warmed up to it that we made for the other, and my success was such that the camp was more than supplied. (Not quite right there, by the way, as I did not deliberately make a distribution). There was a good deal more than we Sahibs could eat, however.

I must tell you our sport was not without expenditure of energy & personal exertion. Our camp was found to be 4 miles from the scene of operations, and we had to ride an elephant, and come back after dark, and as that was after a fair morning's work, it required a good deal of *bandobast*, and left no time for laziness. One might come back in the dark. It happened our Mahout was an aged aged man whose sight was not as good as an owls. He was also not up to the intricacies of the ways of the country. The result was - several times losing the road, & being nearly drowned in the mud of tanks, & paddy fields trying to recover it. Fortunately the elephant had her instincts in good order, & when the banks were so steep that she could not get down, & the mud was so deep as to be likely to drown her, she would not be persuaded to go ahead, so we would turn back, & try another place, & after many trials got safe to dry land. Afterwards, in looking at places next day, we were struck with astonishment, & were much pleased to think we still existed. I don't intend to avail myself of that Mahout's services in a night expedition again.

There were three days of sport in afternoon time, & since then nothing but work. Today and yesterday, I saw flocks of Coolens, also a hare, & several quail, so peradventure we may have some more sport further on. They say there be snipe but I have seen none as yet. There were some awfully pretty ducks among the slain and another bird which I used to shoot in Sind. This later has been deprived of its uniform which I think of sending in a parcel for "personal affection" of your daughters (Jeannie says you are more like a Pelican than ever that you have taken off your feathers to beautify your young) so this contribution of mine may assist. I can not quite promise a perfect success, as this is the first attempt of the doctor *babu* at taxidermy, but if it fails I shall try again.

It is getting dark now and I am sending a man off to the post office 5 miles away, & it will be safer for this to go tonight than wait till tomorrow, so I must needs cut

you short of the fair allowance. Thank Jeannie for her very nice letter, & persuade her to be content with part of the intelligence in this. There are a dozen things I intended to write about, but they have vanished for the time being, & I won't risk missing the mail by keeping them over, & trying to make it more worthy. Thank Fred also for his letter, & give my love to Bessie with thanks for hers. It was very nicely written, & she must try again. Give my love specially to dear little Tom & say I am much pleased to ...

*Subsequent sheet/s are missing*

*The Mahout was the man who controlled the elephant. Fred obviously is quoting him being an "aged aged man whose sight was not as good as an owls".*

*The pelican was supposed to feed her young from the blood (not feathers!) from her breast. She was often used as a symbol of Christian charity.*

*Jeannie, Bessie and Tom are also Fred and Emmie's children. Jeannie is 16 years old, Bessie is 12 and Tom is 9.*

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Xmas day 85 - Camp near Sumbulpore

Emmie darling

I began the day this morning (pretty early) by wishing all thou dear ones a happy Christmas, & I sincerely hope you all had one. I intended giving myself a holiday, & just rode out a little way for enjoyment, but it ended in my doing as big a day's work as usual, & I came home feeling rather used up. It's now evening time, and I am just going to make a beginning only, as I must go out and see after the position of a flag on which tomorrow's work depends. There is no chance of making use of a holiday where we happen to be. Shooting is not known, so there is not much hardship in working, and if perchance shooting does come hereafter, I shall feel no compunction in going for it.

Since your last, which I answered, I see - the second written at the same time and sent through King - 26th Nov, I can now only hope that the matter of that £100 has been satisfactorily cleared up. I hope also you will give it well to King for the gross carelessness in sending that letter back to Bombay, instead of to you, as all other letters and papers were sent. Unless they apologise properly, & do what may be possible to make amends now, they will not see much of my money hereafter. There is one thing very certain, that King ought to have known that a bill of exchange had been drawn on them, long before their giving you all that trouble - and it makes me feel uncomfortable because I think they did know and sent back my letter purposely. The third of Exchange is always sent to the parties on whom a bill is drawn, & I shall take steps to find out if it was not sent in this instance. If it was, the case looks like a swindle, or taking an opportunity to cause you annoyance. As far as I can calculate the mail following the date of your letter, you will have mine from Hazaribagh all about the bill, & King will also have heard from the Bombay firm so I hope you will have got out of your trouble, Em, so much earlier than you expected and Miss Binney's second £50 will have been saved to her. There is one entry in the pass book which you must look to - "Commission and Cash payments". I had arranged about that. There was to be a charge for keeping the a/c (I

think 2 guineas a year), but there was to be no commission. You should tell King that I take objection to ...

Subsequent sheet/s are missing

Fred is earning his pay in India, and having to send payments to Emmie for her and the family to live on. Postage (and money transfers) take weeks to arrive, so the possibilities for mess-ups are obvious. There is the bill of exchange, the second of exchange and (here) the third of exchange, which are copies of the transfer. The second of exchange gets mentioned in future letters, to stop this particular mess-up happening again. Miss Binney is Emmie's cousin, who is living near the family in London. She seems to have lent Emmie money to get over this financial problem.

~~~~~

Camp via Sumbulpore - 4 Feb 1886

Emmie darling

By a mere fluke I discovered that this is Friday (it turns out to be Thursday thinking it Friday). I made a little *bandobast* that has brought me on to Camp two hours earlier than usual, and as I have now done the work that I had to do, I shall begin my letter to you, the spare day to the contrary notwithstanding. I suppose you are not very sanguine about getting decent letters from me, under the existing circumstances of the work I have to do, and the little there is to write about.

We are beginning to be nervous about our work being late, as there was 22 days work in explosions thrown away, owing to a change of route. We are now working back over country we have never seen before, and as it is all covered with jungle and very rough, the job is very difficult, therefore we are hammering away as hard as possible, and there is little leisure time, when we are not so dead tired, as to be incapable of anything.

Hawkes is a first rate worker. I never saw such a willing chap and so painstaking in all he does. He certainly is not a brilliant genius, but in the performance of details of work which he is accustomed to do, I would not want a better man. He is awful fun sometimes. Reminds me of Wiseman a good deal by his simplicity, & he propounds theories so different from any other man, & puts them forward with such innocence, that it is perfectly refreshing. The great drawback is, one must be very careful not to laugh, as he is awfully sensitive, and he is so utterly without guile, that one does not care to hurt his feelings. The other day he enunciated, that Parents ought always to choose wives for their sons, as from the young men's want of knowledge of the world, they are sure to make a mess of it. The sentiment has, I suppose, reference to his first venture. He is so desperately in love with the "devil", the present incumbent, that he never could mean to reflect upon her. He tells me what his wife writes, very often. One day she wrote that she had not got letters regularly. He was dreadfully distressed about it, discussed all sorts of reasons for delay, & then went to work to write twice a day. With regard to his first attempt at matrimony, one can scarcely blame him for not thinking it a success.

I see, by the papers, that Sir Wm. Young has filed a reply in Court, denying all the charges made by Lady Y. in her divorce suit, but we are not yet in possession of any details.

Poor Parker, in a letter the other day, said he had worse news of Harry, that he had got bad again, after being apparently all right, and had to go into a private asylum. That is, I suppose, the same news that you wrote about a mail or two ago (Parker's being a little late). I am so sorry for him, with all his good position and (apparently) ample means, to have his children turn out such failures (that is the only word that covers it all). He appears to see & know of all their shortcomings. He told me a short time ago, of Alice having gone up to town, and not being able to find time to go and see Miss Kelling. He said it with a sneer, and it seemed to me, he had hit the blot exactly. It is really a dreadful thing about Harry. I recd. another letter from Parker a few minutes ago, he speaks of his bad news from home, & says "there is nothing for it but patience & resignation". I am so sorry for him. Govt. are not going to let me take charge from Parker, so that hope (that boyed me up a little, I confess) has gone. Don't say anything about it.

I've yours of the 7th Jan. since I last wrote, and to begin... I was prevented from beginning by the *baboo*. I have gone through the calculation about money, darling, and send an amended memo (I sent one before I think) made out from your figures. I believe, I made a mistake before in thinking there were four terms, which I have now corrected, but there is still an impression on my mind, that Miss Keeling was paid 4 times a year. Please look at the memo, Pet, and see if there is anything wrong, and let me hear what it is. I am keeping a copy of what I send, and so, if there is any alteration wanted, you should tell me where it is. I have put down £25 a month, being £5 over what you say you spent, which I should think would do for clothes for you, & the girls. Say, is this right? I also send memo of what I have sent, & left at home, as I make it. This supposes that the £100 business with H.S.K. has all been cleared up.

This is now Friday evening darling, & the last time of writing. I have just recd. your letter with Jeannie & Binney of the 15th Jan, and this being only the 5th, it is the most wonderfully rapid letter I have had experience of. It is supposed to take 6 days to come from Bombay to Sumbulpore, & if it did take that, then the letter was only 15 days getting to Bombay. I enjoyed it, I can tell you. All seemed to be going on so well, darling, and your money troubles, over which you have been so distressed, is now righted. I had written out the memo of money matters yesterday, and there is no time now to go into it, in connection with your figures and the pass book from H.S.K., but if you look over the figures, you will be able to make something out of them, and tell me when they don't agree with your calculations. I am writing a note for H.S.K., which read over, and send or take to them when you go. I think, I there state the transaction as you have described it to me, & in a way to convince them. If they are correct, if it was not quite as I have stated (that is, if I have not understood you clearly) don't send them the letter, as their having made such a mistake is rather a reflection on them, but if my letter won't do, it will help to clear the matter up yourself. I think however, my letter will be all right. It is very late now, darling, and I have had a long day of it, & I cannot write more now. I will answer,



what you have in this letter asked me to, next time. There seems to be plenty to write about, if I had time. It was a great piece of good luck, getting your letter so early, darling, & 'tis hard to deprive you of any of the benefit, but I can not help it now, Pet.

God bless you all & with my best love, Ever your own, Fred

*Fred's assistant, Hawkes, has a wife living nearby, which explains why he can write to her twice a day. Fred is writing to his wife in England once a week. It is not surprising that Fred holds strong views about marriage, as his own wedding was so romantic! Miss Susan Keeling ran a ladies school at 88, Ladbroke Grove, London. I think she looked after Fred's children as well, at one time. Good manners require that former pupils should visit her if possible.*

*This letter shows the difficulty of managing money where Fred and Emmie are so far apart, with weeks taken for the post. Emmie seems to handle many of the money matters herself. She seems competent, only worrying if money doesn't arrive on time.*

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Camp via Sumbulpore - 11 Feb 1886

Emmie darling

There are, I think, two spare days between this & posting time, but I can't make a better use of the spare half hour, before Hawkes comes in, than by having a talk with you.

I am sending 2nd of Exchange for £50, & I suppose you will have recvd the first by last mail. This will, however, prevent accidents. I dread anything going wrong with the money matters on your a/c.

There are a lot of things in your last to answer. First, that comes to my head, is about Jeannie. I should not mind her going to Willie, if he should come to England, and take her back with him. The expense would not be very great, as it is so much on the way for him coming out to India. As for you, darling, as you cannot be with me, I would rather than elsewhere, you would be with the children at home. The benefit they all derive, from your being with them, is simply incalculable, and you being with them, and they getting the good of it, is the only comfort I have, in my longing, weary longing, for you. Perhaps, when the time comes for your coming to India to me again, you might break the journey, go to Willie for a week or two, & then come on, if he could come to Alexandria to meet you.

Now about Fred. I thought the idea of R.E., & entering Woolwich had been given up, and I would do nothing to force his inclination one way or the other. If, however, he has no strong predilection for one as compared with the other, it seems to me, he might try for Woolwich (that being possible a year before the other), and if he passed so high up as to make certain of his getting a R.E. commission (not an R.A.), then he could pursue it. If the chances were not so good, and if he thought the extra year would fit him for the Indian Civil, then there would be that chance for him. The Indian Civil is certainly the best prospect, & if he could get a university scholarship or exhibition, the expense of it, after passing the exam, would be less for me, than going to

Woolwich. There can be nothing like a scholarship at Woolwich. You will no doubt talk the matter over, & get good advice from many, Charlie Parker, Miss Binney, Leggatt, & here now you have my ideas. The Indian Civil is the best prospect & will probably be less expensive. Next to that is an R.E. commission, but his inclination is to be considered.

Don't worry about Binney's pipe. If there is not excess, there will be no harm, & it is difficult to guide a young man in all small things, & I think he would be worse in many other ways, if he was capable of being guided. If there is force of character, it is apt to rebel or break out in other things. As to the beer, don't put unnecessary restrictions on that either. 'Tis better, to be able to get it at home, than to be tempted to go outside for it. I would not always provide it as a speciality for Binney, but take some yourself, and let him share it. I always gave him beer for his luncheon when with me, if he wanted it. I think you will do what is right, darling, in all these matters. Your instinct (I think it is) takes you straight, generally.

There is another two or three things you often speak about - Jeannie's being afraid to go about alone, & not being as courageous as she was a child. I think it's all natural enough. Her ideas must necessarily change, very much, just at this time of her life, and she has not, as yet, got used to the changes, which make her timid or appear so.

You spoke once too, about Binney being childish, and liking to play with Tom at some childish game. Remember, Pet, his life at school, without any home associations round or near him. He learns things there, that will make a man of him, & don't mind skittles at home. It must be a great delight to have Tom to play with, at any thing. I wish I could.

I think now, darling, I have pretty well answered your letters. I have just come in, from a fruitless pursuit of some wily birds, which I tried to slay, with a view to prevent all your feathers going for your young. I saw them fly about for several days, & as we march tomorrow, my conscience reproached me for not having secured any. It was, however, in vain. They flew, and left me. I have had a box made to send the feathers home, and now, on looking at them, I don't think them worth much, so I must try and get some more, so as to increase the chance of them not being despoised.

We have just got through a spell of surprisingly cold weather. It has been noticeable all over India, and, at night, it was been quite too much for comfort, when living in tents. I used to shiver so when first getting out of bed. It is over now, & the weather waxeth warm, towards midday especially. We are just within reach here of a cold season. Poor Parker wrote the other day, that it was hot & enervating, with no symptoms of a cold weather, where he was at the end of the line on the sea coast, and he would be glad to turn his back on it. He seemed in very low spirits when he wrote. I am so sorry for him. He had heard of Jim's failure again. What is it? Is he not bright? Or is it excess of laziness? An entry into Sandhurst is not such a difficult matter!!

I have nothing to write about from here, darling, except this sort of rambling stuff. We have today got 20 miles of final survey finished, and ought to get the whole completed, before March is over. That will be fairly good work, and as long as one keeps well, there is no object in getting in earlier. Extra pay & T.A. will cease as soon as we

return to Hazaribagh. The last part of the business, marching back 200 miles, will be nothing, as it will be getting higher & higher as we get on, and we can manage without even discomfort.

Parker is expected to be back here in not many days, if he sticks to his programme. I feel low spirited at the idea of his going away. He was the only one about Hazaribagh, whom I came to know or make a companion of, & you know, Pet, tis hard for me to have no one as a companion under my circumstances.

I shall "shut up" now, darling, and with a little more tomorrow, if, by the way, there is room to write more, with the papers to be enclosed.

This is now Friday afternoon, & I shall finish what there is room for, & let this go in tomorrow morning. We are now a march nearer Sumbulpore, and we are beginning to appreciate that we are near the end of the job, and counting the days it will take to finish. We have done 21½ miles and have 40 more to do, but now are getting to a country that we have been over before, so the work ought to proceed quicker. I heard from Lambert, a couple of days ago. He appears really to be going. Says he will be in Bombay on way home on first of March. Mr Cregan has gone on furlough, & Parker also going, ought to make promotion for someone. What do you think - they have brought my lathe and tools, and I am just now looking at a Remittance transfer receipt for Rs 344 in payment for them, quite a haul. I believe I never have taken them away from there, & they would probably have gone to rust & ruin. I wish I had completed the transaction sooner. I should have commissioned Binney to buy for me, at the Army & Navy Stores, a set of folding tools which I ...

Subsequent sheet/s are missing

They are trying to sort out Fred (junior's) future career. He would be 13 years old. R.E. is Royal Engineers. R.A. is Royal Artillery. "Woolwich" was a British Army military academy for the training of officers of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. "Sandhurst" is general army academy for the training of commissioned officers. Fred (senior) is also considering the prestigious career in the Indian Civil Service. He will be responsible for paying for any necessary education, and money is tight. Still, he thinks of his boys' own inclinations. He also gives sound advice on how to treat Binney (about 17 years old), and Jeannie (about 16 years old).

T.A. may be travel allowance. Fred's basic pay continues between jobs, but the extra money will disappear.

Willie is Emmie's brother. I don't quite understand what scheme is being considered - it never happened! Willie was living in Syra, Greece.

Hazaribagh - waiting for next job

Hazaribagh - Saturday 10 April 1886

Emmie darling

I am tempted to commence my letter to you now, though it is two days before time, but Christie, the noisy fellow, promises to be home tomorrow, & there probably will be much interruptions for any quiet occupation.

First, to get rid of business. I send the 2nd of exchange for £61.10. The first probably goes by same mail as this. As promised in my last, I wrote off at once to have the remittance made, but, having to wait till my salary got paid in there, it would be late for last week's mail. This ought now to put you square, and have a surplus over in case of delay in the future, but don't forget, darling, to send me the a/c, showing the receipt and money expended, one on one own page, & other on the other, since the beginning. I spoke of this, I think, in my last.

I have, I think, got all your letters & papers as well. Some of the latter come dropping in at irregular intervals from the Sumbulpore direction. One came in yesterday, "News of the World", and it was quite a treat. The last letter was 17 to 19 March, & of course it was the last that could have been written. You began by saying you had one of your "bad forget times", what was it dear? Fever or the natural thing? What I want to know is, do those the latter come on so frequently, & so bad as before. On the last date, I saw you were feeling well so I was comforted but tell me about it in your next.

Poor little Bessie, she is so young, I thought, such a thing could not happen.

The other day, when coming from Ranchi, I tried to remember the road, as we saw it when driving together in the dog cart, but, look as I would, I could not make out the place, where we saw the dead man lying in the road. My recollection of it was, that there was a branch road coming in to the main road from the right hand side (that is the east). I found such a road but it would not suit to my recollection, & again there was, when we drove along, a police *chowkie* not far from the place where we saw the dead man, do you recollect? and the police man refused to have anything to do with the body, because it was not in his *alaka* (beat). Well, that must have been nearer the boundary between Randi & Hazaribagh. The police *chowki*, as I recollected it, was on the left hand side of the road when we saw it together. Now, this time, I found a similar building, but it was a distillery where they make *Mahwa* spirits and it was on the right side of the road. The only way I can account for the mixture of recollection & forgetfulness is, when we came together I was thinking of you more than Geography. This time I was thinking of you too, darling, & I found myself almost nodding, as I rode along in a dream about you, but trying to recall the places as we saw them together. And, do you know, I could not for the life of me, find the place, where I got out of the *tum tum*, & I went to help you find that bird of paradise. It was a fugitive bird, I remember, but we did some good by going to look after it. Oh dear! Oh dear! that I am here all alone, & when shall I see you again?

The *bearer* of this house (Mr Christie's *bearer* of course) last night showed me a *chitty* you gave him. Do you recollect him, you kept him on I think, after I left, and found

him so useful, willing to do any work at all. I saw your *chitty*, & it certainly was a very good one, & he was proud of it. I notice this man's face, first day I came into the house, & asked Christie about him, but of course he knew nothing. Afterwards the man recalled himself to me, & although I remembered his face, it took me sometime to believe he had been in my service.

I have made a solemn vow today to go and make some calls. I had down the same before, & failed utterly, but now I have on a white shirt with protruding cuffs, & the *tum tum* ordered to come to office for me. I think I should accomplish two, at any rate. I called on the Policeman Memsahib & the "Devil", but there is the Dct Commissioner Missy *baba* (over 50 I should think sometimes but 35 at others, so don't be jealous), who will begin to look savage, if I don't perform my duty soon. I played against her at lawn tennis the other evening, & beat - that is my side beat hers. Twas no fooling either. The ladies here play as well as ordinary men. There is another fair one, who will look savage if I don't call. She is a grass widow, & plays well too. The Dct and she beat me & my man partner. So I must call on her too, & then there is Mrs Johnston & Mrs Lawy, with their progeny, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, widows & children

This is now Sunday morning, & I have just come in from a walk, & going round the jail with the Dr. You know that going around the jail, what a weariness it is. Today more especially, Sunday morning parade, the Dr had a prolonged conversation with every prisoner, principally about permission to write a letter (they have permission to write once in 6 months if they behave well). I lost my interest in the business after a bit, & wandered off, & sat in the shade. I walked over to call on the Dr, and found him just turned out of bed. I was not very early myself, & by the time I had walked over to (where the Cobbs lived - do you remember) the Dr house, it did not suggest early rising on his part.

I stopped here to write a letter to Jeannie, & it has ended in my writing all the rest I wanted or had to say.

The Man (Walker) who takes over from Parker has come, & he is now on my hands. The arrangement is - I am to take charge of myself and everything Parker did, & in fact do the work, but not allowed to have the pay or the credit.

All my love, darling, Your own Fred

Fred is staying with Christie. "The Devil" is Hawke's wife. "Dct Commissioner Missy baba" is the District Commissioner's daughter.

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Hazaribagh Bengal - 2nd May 1886

Emmie darling

This is Sunday morning, & rather an empty morning (I got up at 8 o'clock). I am now composing myself for a talk with you. The state of my intellect is rather below par, I fear, as I attempted to say what I thought good things, & Christi was not taken with them, so tis evident my mind is that I am not as good as I might be. There is nothing the matter,

except being "constitutionally tired", but if it makes me write a stupid letter, the effects on you will be as bad as something worse.

To begin, the most important thing, your letter. It came in Friday evening, a day longer than usual for the boat to get here, but this was an evening delivery of letters, and that saved us something. I was so pleased, darling, to have such good news of all of you. You seemed so well, tho wearing yourself out with work, by the way, & the children having got over their meazles (or whatever it was), & the boys come home with such good reports. Altogether, it was one of the nicest letters I have had since I left you.

I believe you are fairly happy, darling, in spite of your worry & hard work, & it makes me be very grumbly at not having my share of you, & the worst of it is, I cannot see ahead, to me getting my desire. Oh how nice it would have been, if you could have been here now. We are having such nice weather, & we should have been so happy. Oh dear, Oh dear. To think only six months having gone, & they seem so long since I left you, & then, to think that so many months must go by before we can meet, darling.

Now for the money business. You always seem to have a fancy that I will muddle it, but before this reaches you, it will be cleared up. I sent home, immediately I got my pay, a double (ordinary) remittance, so as to keep you from anxiety, & have something for you ahead now. (Yesterday when I got my pay) I sent to the bank to send £42, being £7 over an ordinary monthly sum, to pay for Binney's coaching. We cannot afford to let him fail, and I quite approve of doing all that can made possible to prevent failure. As far as I can see, it will impossible for me to continue his expensive education, after this effort is over. I should have to go into debt, and all would then suffer, if this present rate of payments from my income is to continue. I shall be able to get money enough from 'our Prov' fund, to get you and Jeannie out, and then we may save money enough afterwards on our living (as compared with two establishments) to gradually made up, but I cannot draw from this fund for any other purpose, besides that. If my final payment cannot go on, so as to have a little something when I have to retire, what will become of us? However no more croaking. I think I have done enough for this time. Your a/c of Binney has cheered me up. As far as I can see by the report, he is top of everything in the school but I may be wrong in my reading of the part of the report which you have sent. There is ...

*[sheet/s missing]*

... if you have not already bought it or the other, leave my case of tools unbought, & get the sewing machine instead. I can wait for the tools, & you ought to have the machine, besides that Jeannie could help you so much, if you taught her to use it. All the material in this letter, though, as talk with you, does me good, would have been no good for a letter to Jeannie, so thank her for hers, which was a particularly nice one this time, & give my promise to write one for herself some other time. I would like you to keep on with her painting, in every shape she may fancy. It will be a splendid amusement and occupation for her in the future, & she will do it well, I am convinced.

By next week I suppose that you will tell of Parker's arrival, as he left the week after the letter which you had received. No, by the way, he did not go by Mail steamer, &

probably would be a day or two after the mail in arriving, just as we were when going by Marseilles.

Christi interrupted me to talk a little ago, & got me out of my stride, but I believe there is positively nothing more to say. All my love, darling to you and the dear ones.

God bless you and them all, ever your own, Fred.

P.S. I just remembered, don't forget the old postage stamps from Canada, and write to Willie to send some Greek ones. The Potopaples are nearly all ready & such nice ones. F.L.D.

*"Our Prov" - Provident fund. Fred is paying to coach Binney through the Indian Civil Service exam.*

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Hazaribagh Bengal, Monday 9 May 1886

Emmie darling

Here I am, settled down to writing, with every thing propitious, except that there is a paucity of ideas. Points there have been none, & I am not up to the manufacture of news out of nothing. I have been rotten during the week, and am not quite sound yet.

Your and Jeannie and Fred's letters of 16 etc. came here Friday. It seems my dates to you were 15th March, which left me in the jungal, & must have gone round by Sambulpore. After that, there probably will be a gap of a week, & then possibly two letters together. I have not missed a week anywhere, but there must be a delay and mixing up, when letters had to be sent 40 or 50 miles to get to a post office, and the gap from the time taken in us crossing over the country from one set of post offices to another must make delay.

I hope you won't be as bad, however, as the "Devil" was to poor Hawkes. There were four or five days to be spent in marching from our post office into Ranchi, & he gave for those days, as address to be written to, "Ranchi". On that, she wrote him such a stinger, accusing him of not wanting to come home to her, & spending four days in Ranchi etc. Poor 'Awkes was utterly knocked over, and had almost tears in his eyes, (certainly in his voice), when he told me about it, and he started off immediately from Ranchi, without waiting even a full day for a rest. I must confess to being wicked enough incite him to rebellion but, bless you, he is not as strong minded as even the worm, that did turn eventually. Now that he is returned to his allegiance, he is as happy and cheerful as possible, his face beams with smiles always, and he has not been known to leave his better half for one half hour, excepting during office hours, since he returned. He went to the Club once & once only, when she went with him. I am quite decided not to have anything to do with her beyond a bow, & I shall not even call again. It turns out that she is a "Devil", and no mistake, & I have only just heard of all her performances. She is "not on terms with", as 'Awkes expresses it, anyone in the Station except the present Dy. Commissioner, and two of our Engineers & Missesses. She makes the most deliberate misstatements, utter fabrications and say Miss so & so told her etc. etc., & the last thing

was, she went to Mrs Johnston, & before visitors said that Mr. Johnston had taken improper liberties with her, & tried to ----- her. Did you ever see Old Johnston? He was superannuated four years ago, & looks 70 at the very least, & is without exception one of the mildest inoffensive incapable looking old cussies you can imagine, & to think he should be accused to his wife of such a thing. That story has decided me, & I shall never more cross her doors again. Did I tell you of her wanting to nurse me? Don't let it make you unhappy dear. I did not let her. She insisted on giving a dinner party last Friday, & Christi & I refused. I first accepted, & then was so sorry I could not shake off my fever, & in the morning I wrote asking to be excused. The worst of it all (not the worst by the way - but one of the disagreeables) is there is another little 'Awkes expected almost daily, which does not make even the "Devil" more attractive or beautiful. Now I hope you have heard enough to cure you of all jealousy that may have been consuming you.

Now, darling, I must pitch into you. How is it, you won't do the simplest things to take care of yourself. About that burnt wrist - if you had put Vaseline on it at once, it would have been well almost immediately, & then to go on washing stockings & things, & run the risk of laying yourself up perhaps for weeks. Tis very wrong of you, Emmie darling, & is one of the unhappinesses of my life having you misbehave so. Just like you were when a girl, throwing your medicine out a window.

Now, darling, about my waiting out here, for three years alone. It can't be done, first, because I won't wait for you so long, & next, because I couldn't afford to go home. The money to take me home & back, would bring you & Jeannie out to me. If Binney passes, & it requires you to remain at home for him to go to the University, he must give up the University. If he wants you while at Wren, I suppose you cannot help it, & must stop, but I won't sacrifice myself any more than that, so please begin to plan on those lines.

I wrote last month about sending home £42, & think I told you all about it. The second of Exchange is going with this, & I suppose the first from the bank must go only by the same mail. Perhaps though, the 3rd date of bill may have been in time for the last mail. If so, I hope some of your anxiety will have been relieved, before this reaches you. Try, darling, to have confidence, & think that every thing shall be done to keep you from trouble & worry, as far as I can do it, & don't work yourself into a state of illness, under the impression that I shall forget, & delay, & leave you in want. In all the money arrangement since I left you, Pet, you know that the muddles were not of my doing.

You must write again the account of the Knapps adventure, with the Chutah. Some word has been left out, & I can't make anything of it. You say "Hs left Ws & came on a chutah etc. etc. Chutah caught a good instead of a wife. Mr. K. quite overcome, Mrs. K delighted at Corny thinking her worth it". What was it, darling, do tell me.

I heard from Madras, a day or so ago, to the effect that Campbell had paid into my credit Rs 120/-. It is I suppose the price of Soda Water share, less something owing to Campbell for horses' keep. I did not hear from C himself. I suppose he has gone off on his leave, & perhaps he is now at home, but I will write, & solve the mystery, if possible,

when it is time for him to come back. There is nothing of old Nellore matters left unsettled, except the dinner service

I have shut up my map this afternoon, so as to write some more. I finish this, rather leave any for tomorrow. An order has come to send the elephants away, and hand them over to the Military Authorities, which means that this survey is not to be resumed next season, & I shall have to attend to that, in addition to my other work. I am not sorry that the elephants are going, as they are a nuisance & worry & no profit, but it brings before me the state of change & uncertainty, of where I am to go to next. It was looked for, of course, but changes are better when they come suddenly, without looking forward to them so long, before it can be known what the next move is to be. The Govt of Bengal is quite in the dark as what provincial work can be done, & it is now over a month since all money (financial) matters should have been settled, so that arrangement for spending the money, & doing the work, should be started, but nothing has been done yet. The report a short time ago was that 20 engineers were to be handed over to Railways from the Provincial list, but if r'way projects are to be closed, there seems to be no use in sending more men. I believe the fact is, every thing is awaiting the turn of Politics at home, & Govt. here are afraid to do anything in the present uncertainty.

I must not forget to tell you a funny dream I had yesterday afternoon. (8th April) I often have dreams about you, darling, but this was so vivid, that it took some time to convince me you were not here. I thought I was sitting in our room, & you called out from another, & I ran to you. You looked dreadfully thin, and palid, drawn and ill. You ran to me in the usual way, but afterwards you turned away, & would have nothing to say to me. I was glad when that stopped, I can tell you, by my waking up. I had got a little bit down, by thinking of your last letter, I suppose, & the affair was mixed up, probably, by something I had been reading when I fell asleep.

I had intended sending something this time, in way of a letter, to Fred, but find I have written too much in this, to admit of it, when enclosing the bill of Exchange. Thank him & Jeannie for their letters, & say I will write at some other time. I was glad to get the Family Record of Stature, & I have entered in my diary. I am glad Binney has made such a start. He will soon be satisfied now. Jeannie (poor me says) has not grown at all. Was she desirous of over-topping her Father as she has her Mother? I think she will do as she is. I suppose Miss Bessie will only be satisfied when she too looks down on Mother. Tom ought to be pinched, I think, to make him start.

I suppose Parker is now near you somewhere. It will be a comfort to talk to him about me, and perhaps to get his advice about Binney, & you will be a comfort to him in his troubles, I know. I will stop now darling, with lots of love to all and yourself above all. How I long for you. Oh dear...

Your own Fred

Wren is coaching Binney for his Indian Civil Service exam.

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*This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date around May 86*

*sheet/s missing*

... of the resounding wedding. It came off all right on Monday, tho the poor man did not look as happy such as he might have done, & the general opinion is that he is not as happy as should have been expected. The sister of the bride was married a year or so ago, & has nearly ruined her husband - spent Rs 30000 in a few weeks (I believe), had a carriage and pair, & a lot of other useless absurdities, resulting in next to bankruptcy. This young Lady has developed a tendency to 'Popery', insisted on going to R.C. Chapel on Good Friday, and after starting to go to the communion at our Church, turned round, & came away. In the afternoon of the wedding, they drove out to a *bungalow* a few miles from here, where everything had been arranged (as it is supposed) for them to spend the honeymoon. The next morning early, they were seen coming back to his house here. They have been met by an acquaintance on the road, and the young lady complained that it had been very hot, & she could not sleep well. You may depend, it was told about the station pretty freely.

Yes, I remember your many attempts & failures to see the Golden Oriole last year. You took a good deal of trouble to see a bird of paradise on one occasion.

You will find something entertaining in your new Pioneer - Case of Mingate vs. Mingate & a Col Macpherson. I thought, possibly, the daily paper might have in it a fuller a/c, & so thought of sending it to you, but, if Jeannie opened the paper & read it, it would scarcely do to have such a remarkably large portion of the reading taken up, in a paper specially sent home. So you must just trust to your weekly paper. Perhaps it will be all there, & you will be much instructed - a nice young lady & a particularly nice Col.

I am sending, by this mail, a map which shows the Railways of India, on which I have marked in blue (purple rather pencil) the survey that we have been working at. It branches off from the line which has resulted from the survey I was at work on in 82 (between Nagpur & near Culcutta) and goes south & east past Sambalpur to Cuttack and Puri, which latter is a great place for Pilgrims, & where the celebrated Juggernauts Temple & Cars are - you know, the enormous Cars one reads about, which the people throw themselves under to be crushed & go straight to heaven. You will be able to find the pencil mark, I dare say, & give the young people lessons in Geography.

I shall not have space (room by weight I mean) to send home Jane Arnold's certificate with this, but it shall go some time before commencing tomorrow's writing. I must weigh and see if I can afford another sheet

I see, by the papers, that Lambert has arrived in London, & if he has not lost all characteristics but his selfishness, he will, before this, have gone to see you. I have lost faith in L, & begin to believe what other people have always said of him, that his speciality is selfishness, & his friendship for me was due to his desire to get me to work for him & under him. Failing that, he cared for anything but his own aggrandizement.

This is now Monday, & last time of writing. Parker, I suppose, will have reached home, & settled down somewhere near you, long before this. He will be able to help you with advice in a difficulty, as you will be a comfort to him in his difficulties. He expected

to feel many difficulties, in commencing an establishment, with those two young ladies to look after, & he has more faith in you than his sisters and cousins and aunts.

I received the Papers this week, darling, & Caldicott's "Ride a Cock Horse etc". Oh dear. What a time it seems since I used to play "The Raven went croak & they all tumbled down" with the two babies, 14 years ago in the old Joseph House in Madras. Ask Jeannie if she think she could tumble down with as much grace now as she did then. What sad scenes those are when the old mare's knees are getting battered & tied up, & this old Farmers Crown getting bandaged, but that frightful crack in the old man's crown looks as if it wanted more than bandaging. There is not so much scope for art as in some of the other work but the caricatures in faces & figures are simply perfect.

Must stop now darling, & wind up before going to breakfast to make sure no accident can prevent this going to the afternoon post. Love to all & yourself above all.

Ever you own Fred

*"Sisters and cousins and aunts" from HMS Pinafore by Gilbert and Sullivan  
From Randolph Caldecott illustrated book "Ride a Cock Horse":*



*A farmer went trotting upon his grey Mare, bumpety, bumpety, bump!  
With his Daughter behind him, so rosy and fair; lumpety, lumpety, lump!  
A Raven went "Croak!" and they all tumbled down; bumpety, bumpety, bump!  
The Mare broke her knees and the Farmer his crown; lumpety, lumpety, lump!*

~~~~~

Hazaribagh Bengal, Monday 21 May 1886

Emmie darling

This is Friday. Your letter of 25th to 30th April came in last night, by great good luck. It is (as you see) 3 days earlier in the week, for posting from here, and I make it out that the next steamer (under the monsoon arrangement) will start so much earlier. So I am writing again, to prevent the danger of your being without. The events, since Monday, have not been very exciting, & news founded thereon would boil down to a very few lines. So, don't think me more than usually stupid because of this production.

There has been, besides the usual rising early and late taking rest, but once a cause of excitement, the Picnic of which I must have told you. My share of this however has been only the many arguments used to make me promise to go, & then unremitting abuse since the event, because I did not go. Christi & I declared it was too much trouble, & too little recompense, so we did not go, & I believe the very truth is they missed us much. There is only one man, besides ourselves, that has any ideas of making fun. The others generally mar it.

What do you suppose was said about me, not very long ago. I was afraid to tell you before, & run the risk of making you unhappy. An old married Lady with numerous offsprings (marriageable) "How I wish, Mr Dibblee was a bachelor", leading me to infer that Mr. D would be specially eligible.

They are now starting another dance, the Bachelors in the Station. I don't mind. As I shall not go, there is no reason why I should object to their taking the trouble for the pleasure.

The other event is, Lichis have come in, not quite perfect in ripeness yet, but delicious very. I bought some of the first lot yesterday. I have been trying to devise a way of sending home two or three by post, just to show what they are like, & perhaps I may manage it by next mail, if I find they will stand a day or two, without getting beyond recognition.

Since I last wrote (I think), a formal letter from Govt. has come, giving sanction to my having charge of cash stores etc etc, on behalf of En. in C. Why they made a fuss about it, I don't see, but the effect is, the fact of my doing all the work is made patent and recognized. The Govt of Bengal fought to have me put in charge, & now only thing omitted is - my getting the pay.

Walker talks of coming up again soon, but is not decided exactly when. The last suggestion is that I should make type designs for the bridges and Cutout of the whole line, but that, I shall get out of. He undertook to alter some of my gradients when I sent them down for approval, but wrote a letter, saying I might alter them back again if I thought well. Strong minded man!!

Now, darling, about your letter and Jeannie's. You were again, darling, in better spirits, although as you said "tired". Poor Pet. I am afraid, you will work yourself to fiddle strings, but if you would only stop a little short of it, the life in England will a benefit, and liability to fever will diminish. It will be a great satisfaction to me, to feel that you are getting benefit from the separation, that punishes me so so much. I was glad

to hear you say, darling, that your hands were well, & I must suppose that your burnt wrist must be included in the well. I hope so at least. Tis a mistake to think that Vaseline is no good unless you lay up. For a burn, it acts like magic. As an instance, when I was soldering up the tin of feathers, I managed, in some way, to lay the nearly red hot soldering iron on the back of *bearer's* hand. It burnt so bad as to leave a great white (grilled) stripe across the skin, regularly seared. I at once put on a coat of Vaseline, & he did his work as usual. Next morning there was not even a blister. So do try & use remedies sometimes, Pet. It really worries me dreadfully, to see you behave so badly in taking care of yourself.

I wish, Pet, you would give the dates of my letters which you receive. You always speak of them reaching you, but sometimes omit the date, & it is a puzzle to me to work out where I had been, & what I had written, without knowing the date. I think over your letters a good deal, Pet, & it's a pleasure to me, to couple together anything I may have written in my letter to you, at the time you were writing, so if you will give the date, it will help me.

It was rather queer in Ketchum being home all that time, not going to see you. If it proves true that he was in London from November, & you get an opportunity of letting him know, I hope you will, that I did not expect him to be guilty of such an unkind rudeness. I suspect there must be some reason for his not showing himself, some dissipation or other performance, that he fears might become known to you, & that he wished concealed. You might let them know in your letters home, how he has behaved, and what is thought of it.

"*Hazri taiyar hai, mezpar, Sahib*" is the announcement that stops me for a time. I am back again for the rest of our talk. That is the only thing to call it. I somehow seem just keep on writing down words with no news, & perhaps with very little sense sometimes, but it does me good, darling, & is one of the real pleasures I have. You don't mind my being prosy. It has been a great thing for those children having you with them, & just at this time. I sometimes think Binney would have had no chance of success, had you remained out here, but don't forget, darling, I have a claim on you, & I can't do without you for one day longer than proves to be absolutely necessary. I won't say more than this until we know what is to result from Binney's exam: but I can't help longing & longing. Oh dear!

I think I know what letter of mine it was you speak of having received. In fact, I do know for certain. It was commenced on your birthday, & finished the day after, just when Parker was leaving here. The week before, you must have got one I posted from Ranchi, & the previous one written on ...

Subsequent sheet/s are missing

Lichis are lychees.

En. in C - Engineer in Chief

~~~~~

Hazaribagh Bengal, 8th July 1886

My dear Binney

I must let you have a few lines this week, in acknowledgment of your letter of the 10th, since I was very glad to get your letter, & much pleased with what you had to tell me of your expectations and hopes regarding the Examinations. I trust they may be realised, and that you will get so placed, that Wren's may think it worthwhile your trying again and in earnest next year. From your description of the papers, & how you dealt with them, I formed the idea that you were keeping cool over it, which is half the battle. Your brains may be crammed to overflowing, & be no avail if you cannot put it down on paper, or speak it out when the time comes. In one of your reports from Haileybury, one master said, if you "only worked as well on ordinary occasions as you did for a prize, you would do wonders." Now will be your opportunity! When you go to Wren's (if you do go), you will be working for a prize there, of life long value. Wren's (from what they say of him) will show you how to make the most of yourself, & make you work up in what ought to enable you to pass. From what Mr Ash told me, I have no fear about your general education being sufficient for your duties afterwards, but what is to be looked to, is your getting through that ordeal, where the competition is so keen.

It will be a useful thing to know - who the men are who are likely to go up next year after failing this, and to see how they passed, in particular subjects when they compete with you. From what you write, you are evidently not strong in Mathematics. 200 out of a possible 1000 would bring down an average of good marks in other things to a low figure, so you should not run the risk of being weak in that. If I remember, that is what your Cramming, during the last holidays, was giving attention to, and you should ask Wren's about it, & work specially at it. You see by the way I am writing I have great hopes of your succeeding in being placed, & afterwards going through for the final Tussle, at the same task. I suppose there will be several mails more after this, before I can hear definitely.

Now, my boy, I must speak of what your Mother says, and it has pleased me so much to know how considerate and attentive you have been to her, & carrying out her wishes and requests. Never a boy in this world had a better Mother. Her love for you, and your brothers and sisters, is simply unbounded. No sacrifice of self would be too great for her to make, if she thought you would benefit. She is simply wrapped up in you all, and the thought of her pride & joy, in your success, should be one of your strongest inducements to a determination on your part to succeed.

You must get all ordinary news from Mother, & tell Jeanie also, she may not expect a special letter this time. Hers of last mail was a very nice letter indeed, and she should keep them up as a help to Mother, in giving me one of the great pleasures of my life, hearing how you all get on. Jeanie sent an extract from Fred's letter which I was also glad to get. I liked to hear about his Latin paper being so good. I hope he expected the meazles. I think Haileybury has had more than a fair share of distempers during late months. Tis a fortunate thing for you being an absentee just at that time, & I hope you may escape. You have had I think meazles to last any man's life twice.

Tom's last was not bad. I am glad he is not such a simpleton as that boy who accepted a bet, of a "slap in the face", as a proof that his point in the argument was the right one.

Now with best love to you all - your affectionate Father F.L.Dibblee

*Haileybury is a public school. Both Binney and Frederick (junior) attended. See Haileybury, past and present by L.S.Milford. "Cramming" means being coached to pass an exam.*

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Hazaribagh Bengal, 9th July 86

Emmie darling

You must not expect anything brilliant this time, as there are all sorts of things against me. I have been seedy for some time, but that seems to have passed away, & is not the worst of my misfortunes, as regards my being able to write. Your letter has not come in yet, nor will it be possible to for it to come, before the last hour of working. For some reason, the steamer has been much longer in coming from Aden than it usually is, although it left that place a day earlier than usual, yet it has lost that day & part of another. I suppose something happened. That now being the case, I have made my mind up to follow the post master for advice, & send letters away the day before. During monsoon time, there is great danger, he says, of trains being late, & the last mails missing the steamer.

If there was a chance of your letter arriving by waiting, I certainly should however run the risk, as I want inspiring badly, to make this worth your having. It will be no good anyhow, & you may as well get the rubbish, without chance of failure, by my writing today instead of tomorrow. I am down in my luck, because of the news came by telegram, last evening. They have appointed the new man over me, as indeed was supposed to be intended, but lately everything had revived the hope, that I should not be passed over after all. Govt. did not fill up the place till the very last. Yesterday, Walker was not told who was to take it, and the idea of sending a man here specially, in addition to me, was such an absurdity, that I did feel a little inclined to hope they got reports about that, & no-one else was coming. The result was, when I last evening read the telegram, that Owen had been appointed, there was a drop rather. They say he is a very good fellow, so I must try, & be cheerful, while I am teaching him his work. He never did anything of this kind before, and I, of course, have done it dozens of times. Tis very saddening & disheartening, to know personal spite is carried so far, & it's might[y] hard to feel much interest in my work, under the circumstances.

Nothing has happened since I last wrote, even of the little events that are taken note of this peddling little society. We have English telegrams & newspapers, overflowing with exciting news, but that, of course, is no help in writing to you. You won't care to hear that they gave three cheers for the G.O.M. when the Irish vote was taken. The telegrams, of course, spoil the papers considerably, but, as far as the principal events are concerned, we know them here, very nearly as early as you do in Notting Hill.

I am very anxious to get your next letter, Pet, to hear what there is to tell about Binney's exam. That, of course, is all over (or was) before date of your coming letter, but tis not likely this result can be definitely known, but you can tell me, what Binney thinks is likely.

I want also to know, if you have been using yourself up, and abusing your constitution, as you appear to be doing by the last previous letter. If you would only take care of yourself, darling, how much more comfortable I should feel!

The Camp is inclined to the view, that Mr Alexander certainly is engaged, or has an understanding with the young woman Miss King, of whom I must have told you. I can't say I take much interest in the matter. I don't admire either party, but there must be something serious the matter, when a man, who was formerly never known to miss a game of Whist, now goes in for a Miss (that's awful bad but I am rather proud to know there is a desire even for a joke in me), and the fair sex exclusive. He does not even play tennis with men, only except by accident. A few days ago, the Dr with whom Mr A lives, gave a dinner party to which this fair one (I beg her pardon for the misnomer) was bidden, with her sisters, cousins and aunts, of course.

The other info is that the last made happy pair, Mr & Mrs Van Allen, have come nearly to fisticuffs. There were oceans of tears, beyond a doubt. She has, so report says, caused her better half's anger, by insisting on becoming a Roman Catholic. He has however taken a stand, and forbidden her to go to the R.C.Chapel, or to the Convent. He has been making open lamentations to outsiders on the subject, instead of his washing being done at home, as is I think the best way. All this, occurring less than two months after the happy event of them being made one, does not promising much for a lifetime of conjugal bliss.

We have had very fair weather, and not too fresh, considering that we are supposed to undergoing our rainy season. A down pour sometimes extinguishes a game of tennis, & sometimes the courts are too wet entirely, but on the whole I manage to get some exercise on most days.

I went out yesterday, and went all over the Tea Manufacturer's establishment, at Mr. Bowman's. Tis quite a big place, a range of houses & buildings, with some steam engines & machinery of sorts, and the outhouse is very much more considerable than I had any idea of. We have been buying some of their tea lately. It is very pure & nice clean tasting & 18/ a lb, but the flavour is not anything special. Later on, we are to have some of the first class tip top quality, & after trying some, I intend going into the question of sending you home a box of it, just as a specimen. I fancy, it will be landed by post, cheaper & of better quality, than you can or do buy it. However I shall go in for the calculations, by the time he gets his next batch matured & ready for packing. There is a great wooden bin, holding thousands of pounds, into which he stows the various qualities to ripen, till they get full. Then he packs, & sends it off.

There is another Establishment, that I have to see. Tis a Frenchman or Dutchman, of some description, has got a patent of some improved method of winding silk fibres taken from the cocoons, about which great things are expected, & I am curious

to see the thing. The man is now away in Calcutta, & Christi knows him. So I shall wait till he returns. I don't think they weave cloth here. Tis, I believe, all exported as thread, so you need not be afraid of my recklessly purchasing something that you sneer at.

Tis getting on towards office times, & I must soon wind up, at which probably you'll rejoice, after reading so far of this rubbish. We are not working very hard just at present as there is appeared a danger of our getting out of this job too soon. I am much ahead of the others, and a few hours a day, in doing what is necessary to settle things, is all I have to do. I often wish there was more to do, as the amusements are not exciting enough, or sufficient in quantity, to fill up the gaps in our time.

I am now in office, & find that the fact of the transfer of E in C's business is perfectly known, probably *baboos*, corresponding during among themselves, have settled this whole thing. I think I will take advantage of their being more fully informed, to learn what the news is, in all detail. I have just found out that the *babu* has only been talking knowing, without knowing really anything, not so much as I do, in fact.

When you get your weekly Pioneer, look for and read "distraining a Cow". It is awfully good, & the boys & Jeannie will enjoy it immensely, I fancy. Now darling, Love to all, & I'll stop.

Your own, Fred

G.O.M. - "Grand Old Man", the nickname of Gladstone.

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Hazaribagh, 6 Aug 86

Emmie darling

Your letter of the 13 & 16 July has come in, & I must now send a few lines in addition to what was posted yesterday. Your letter about Binney, was a blow & no mistake, & what is worse, I cannot, with any certainty, make out how bad the news is. You say, his number is 137, & the number of his marks 167, but there is nothing to show how near to the bottom he is. I have the report of the 1881 exam, & to judge from that, by the number of marks, he would be only 4 from the bottom, but from the "column order of merit", he might be 10 from the bottom. I can't help wondering, whether you know how bad it is, & don't want to tell me all at once, or whether you are giving me all the information you have, up to that time, received. As soon as you get this, darling, if not sent before, please hurry & send me at once the pamphlet that is published every year (price one shilling). The full title is Civil Service India Civil Service - Examination Papers, set as an open exam for the Civil Service of India - held etc. etc., in June 1886, together with regulations, & tables of the marks obtained. You can buy it at several booksellers, Stamford 55 Charing Cross being one.

If Binney was 10th from bottom, I would not despair of his succeeding next year, after a year at Wren, but if lower than that, then I fear it is hopeless. However, dearest, you have done the very best possible, under the circumstances, in going so promptly to Wren, & taking his advice, & probably the best that could be done (speaking without knowing the exact place Binney has taken) would be for him to have a term at Wren's. Every one says, he is a rough old brute, but that he is above all things straight and

honest in the opinions he gives, on the capabilities of his pupils. I am not sure that Mr. Ash was justified in speaking so hopefully to me about B's chance, & if he is like that regarding others, I cannot wonder at Wren blowing out against Haileybury. It cannot be jealously on W's part, as there is no evidence of a Haileybury boy having got into the Services, without going to a Crammer. It has been an unhappy time for me, darling, since I got your letter, & I don't know how many times it has been read over. There is one part I don't quite make out. You say, Wren "said he had a chance", that's comforting, but what did he mean by "he has passed one from Haileybury as low as 130"? Does he mean that he coached ...

*Subsequent sheet/s are missing*

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Hazaribagh Bengal, 17 Aug 86

Emmie darling

This is Wednesday morning, & I am again, as before, commencing my chat with you, so as to get it posted by Thursday instead of Friday. There has been no break this week, that I have heard of, but all the same, tis just as well not to run the risk, of your being disappointed, by having a weeks delay in getting my letter, even if it is rubbish. The Postmaster says the English Mail is not expected til Friday, so there is some cause for delay somewhere.

We have had a small storm in this tea pot, but I don't feel sure of being able to make it interesting to you, as you can care so little about any concerned. You know the context however, so that may help. Well, the Convent comes in prominently. I have told you of Van Alan, I fancy, & of his marrying Miss Wilcox out of the convent. Yes, I'm sure of that - & of there being a row, about her going to the R.C. Chapel. All went on quietly for some time, but those old hags of nuns were working away steadily, and last Saturday it was announced, that Mrs. Van Alan was to be baptised the next day. Van Alan went & kicked up an awful row but they were too many for him. It seems the young woman worried & worried at him, & at length told the Nuns she had got her husband's consent. He says, he, in a moment of irritation, once said "oh, do as you like" or some thing of that kind, but had never consented to her joining the R.C.Church, & he would not consent. Sure enough, next morning she was baptised. The people are all up in arms, the ladies cut her at the club pretty generally, won't play tennis with her, and there is a conspiracy started to set up a school, & take away all Protestant pupils. I hope they'll stick to that. I am sorry for Van Alan, for he has himself only to blame, having been sufficiently warned against the young woman, but there are many good points about this man &, if he had a proper wife, could have been made into a very good fellow. I never saw a man look so distressed. He came to our place, & sat in the drawing room for more than half an hour, scarcely saying a word, not even to speak of the performance, which he seemed to wish to. This was the Sunday morning when the "function" at the R C Chapel was going on. The young woman shouted across the Club ground, to ask Mr Dibblee if he would play tennis with her. The reply was, it was too hot to play tennis just then, but a friend remarked that Mr Dibblee jump up five minutes (more or less) afterwards, & join another set, & played until dark.

Talking of another set, this was a party from Ranchi, who are making a great splurge. The Commander of this battalion is a Mr Slack, Bengal C.S., but his authority is believed to be only nominal, the real Chief being his "Masher" wife. Oh isn't she a swell!! Tall, not much out of shape by reason of two babies, with tremendous "Pouter Pigeon" development on the upper part of her figure, small (rather old fashioned I thought) hat, and a wing feathered plume in it, (I don't think plume is the proper word, it should be cockade.) Her stays were so tight, she could not stoop to pick up the balls, & used to be utterly upset when I sent the tennis balls, as hard as I could drive, into her petticoats about 6 inches above ankle level. She was not much count at tennis, but she had a Bow-wow, who was a first rate player, & would have smashed me & my side, all to fits, if it

had not been for the haughty fair one. She used to stand with left hand on her ample hip, & with a big gauntlet glove on, the right held her racket in the correct position, & her head erect and haughty. The Bow-wow was great part of his time, gathering & presenting the balls to her. He'd shout to the *choakree* to send the *golies*, catch them when the game was going on, and present them with a slight bending of the body, two at a time on his tennis bat. She, being graciously pleased to accept them, made a slight acknowledgement by bending her figure in the middle, & then proceeded to play. It was great fun, & I hope to have more of it this evening. Christie & I are going to call, & take stock of the fair one at short range. The husband, whom Xie [*Christie*] knew before, called on us yesterday. By the way the Bow-wow's name is Mullins, & he looks like the Col. Mullins whom we used to see in Madras long years ago. I don't know that he is any thing belonging to him however, but he makes a first rate Bow-wow. I very much fear I shall not have the chance of admiring her airs & graces this evening at tennis, as it has turned out rainy & will be too wet.

This is now Thursday afternoon, & your chance of getting a decent end to this is very small. I have been in Court, & waiting for the Court all morning, from 11 to now nearly 3, & I was called as witness for the defence, in the case of Xie's *bearers*. I have been pretty near tired out with it, as I was under examination nearly 2 hours. I think the defence is rather sorry I was called, as the case for the prosecution is much stronger than it was before. A good many damaging statements came out as my evidence.

I am almost tempted to put off finishing this till tomorrow, & run the risk of it being the last day. I have sent in my application for a month's leave. It went in earlier than intended, as old Potiphar forced my hand by sending in an application for his leave, & I could not let his go up without mine going too. I think you had better address your next letter to care of Postmaster Bombay. I can send instructions there, and less time will be lost than if it comes up to Hazaribagh. There is a little uncertainty about my going in Oct, however, as I hear Col Stanton is not going till December, & one of my objects, in taking the leave, is to be away when the time comes for my being posted, & to return after Col. Stanton has cleared out. I will think it out, and probably shall be able to tell you in my next, but sending your letter to Bombay, instead of direct, will only cause one day's delay.

Tis now certain, that the mail cannot reach me till Friday, tomorrow night, but there is just another chance, which now occurs to me, why I might meet with the disappointment of not getting a letter at all. Your Brighton trip might have come off, & may have caused derangement about your letter. I am glad, darling, you settled to go. It will do you & Jeannie good, & possibly make it necessary for you to work a little less than you have been doing. Your last letter, darling, is the 19th to 25th July. You seemed pretty jolly, & your letter was very enjoyable to me. Poor J had got over her bad face, before you finished, which was a comfort to know, and you had got to a good time. I have just read your pages over again Pet, & it is a real good letter. Many thanks darling, but there is not much to answer in it.

I am as stupid as an owl. All from that court, I think, & there is some work I ought to do, if I had strength of mind enough to stop this. Old Potiphar, opposite me, however appears to have industry enough for two.

I think we have got all the Dilke Crawford case out here now. The general belief is that C.W.D, as Mrs Crawford enters him in her diary, has not done wisely, in opening up the case a second time. He had better have kept quiet, and tried to live it down, but he would have it, and the last state is worse than the first. There appears to be no doubt that he has perjured himself, in addition to his other wickidnesses. I don't think he was a nice man to have as a family friend. I quite agree with you, that Mrs C is by far the worst of her kind, & she certainly made the fullest possible use of the education Sir C.D. gave her.

The fair enslaver from Ranchi, Mrs Slack showed at the Club again, last night, but did not give me an opportunity of seeing her performance, as her tennis was in a court on the other side of the ground. But Oh! it was a sight to see the faithful diligence of that Bow-wow. She kept him going at a trot all over the Club grounds, looking for some missing property. She came into the billiard room, & played whist with us men, & never going near the ladies department. They say, she play whist very well, & is quick & sharper at getting her cards out than any of us.

There was a dance at the Garbets two nights ago, & the pervert (Mrs Van Alan) sat without anyone to speak to her nearly the whole evening. It seems to be the determination, to make her as uncomfortable as possible. There are two or three Roman Catholics in the place however, & they cannot quite send her to Coventry.

I have not as yet got at short range with the fair Ranchi-ite, as the call did not come off, because of the Court business and, at the Club, she persistently wears her veil down. However, we should try again tomorrow.

You must thank Jeannie for her two letters, 15 & 23 July. Tis quite hopeless, to think of my doing anything separate for her this time, having no brains available for the purpose

It has just come on to rain again so hard, that we have to put off starting for home, & so there is a little extra time for me. My pony won't stand having a umbrella erected in the cart behind him, & so my devoted head gets a full benefit when rain comes on. Water-proof and apron keep the rest of me pretty dry however.

I think that School at Tiverton a very good idea for Tom, and if you can compass this arrangement of getting Parker's sister to take the boy, it will be a great comfort to me.

Just here, I was obliged to shut up and go home, & there is now only time to sign before catching the mail. Tis a pity to leave till tomorrow, even if the risk of missing steamer is small.

Love to all darling, ever your own, Fred.
Awfully sorry, there is no news of the tea having left yet - forgive - FLD

"Bow-wow" means an attentive harmless young man in attendance on a woman.

"Masher" - dandy.

Pouter pigeons look as if they have a puffed out chest.

Potiphar is a Biblical character, the captain of the palace guard.

The Crawford case was a notorious divorce scandal of 1885.

"Send to Coventry" not talking to someone. "Cut" has a similar meaning.

"Pervert" also has a meaning of "a person who has forsaken a doctrine or system regarded as true for one thought false." (OED) So not too bad an insult!

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Hazaribagh Bengal, 2 Sep 1886

My dear Binney

A sliver of this week's correspondence must go to you. Your letter of 6 Aug was a relief to me somewhat, on the subject of your Exam. Your Mother gave me the number of your marks, was much less than it appears to have been (I mean than it is), and that your place was 13th, without saying what the total number of candidates was. Consequently I took a very much worse view of it than need have been. Of course it would have been consolatory, if you had come quite up to the Estimate made out for you, by Mr Ash, but to judge from the marks you made in some things (I got the book last night) - Composition, Latin, French, and German & Mathematics, and compare the number of marks that some of the successful candidates made, I think we may feel hopeful of what can be done, after a year of Wren's tuition. In all those subjects, he will surely improve you, so as to increase your marks, when you this far have done fairly, & in History & Literature, a little directed reading ought to bring you to an appreciable number. It will depend, of course, more upon yourself than any one else. I could not give you a better opportunity, than by sending you to them, & if you will only work properly, & stick to it till the end, I see no reasons to despair. In your Haileybury reports, they have more than once remarked, that if you worked, generally, as well as you have done in getting prizes, you would be very successful. You have a prize in earnest before you now, and I need scarcely say, what a gratification, to your Mother & to me, it would be if you do succeed.

I see they have got down, among the list of schools at which candidates were educated, Haileybury College - successful candidates - unsuccessful 2 - Total 3. Where is the mistake? Was one Haileybury man successful not entered? Or ought the total to have been 2? Or does it mean that there were 2 specially prepared, & 1 without subsequent preparation? It seems funny that more Haileybury men don't go up, only 3, out of such a large number, going in (when Haileybury being used to be the college for Indian Civil Service), for the highest educational prize in the kingdom (I suppose, there is nothing, in the way of direct result of education, as a prize, that is greater than the I.C.S.). There were, I see, 9 Tinkers and Tailors sons went up, and 2 were successful, so tis clearly nothing but education.

I was pleased to see that the masters, Mr Ash, I suppose it was, that you had made yourself a favourite socially. Pleasant manners, & the faculty of making for yourself friends, is one of the greatest helps in getting on in life. I see by looking at your report just now, that both Mr Ash & Headmaster say much this same thing. But they also

speak of you not concentrating your attention, & losing time at your work that you can cull. Your Mother speaks of you being well in health and spirits, and says she is determined to help you to work, & I hope you will do your utmost not to disappoint us.

It is a great thing for you having a home to go to during this year of what must be hard work. You will be well looked after & it will be a pleasant change for you to come away from the Mill, when your grinding is done, & be with Mother & sisters. They speak of your appetite in the very highest terms. You must refer to Mother for general news of me. as I must not cut off her letter too much. I got the list of heights and weights, and am glad get them in order. They are now entered in my diary for a comparison with the last. You seem to be doing pretty well, & may now give up the despair that used to afflict you, at being so small. As your Mother speaks so highly of your appetite, I dare say that you will grow a little more, & that will suffice. Jeanie is tall enough for all useful purposes, & Fred & Bessie have nothing to complain of, but what has been done to poor Tom. He seems going backwards. He ought to make his start soon. Now with love to all - I'll stop.

Ever your aff father F.L.Dibblee.

*"Tinkers and Tailors sons" is obviously a school - Merchant Taylors, perhaps?*

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## **Singapore - on leave**

S.S. "Arcot" one day from Singapore, 19 Oct 1886

Emmie darling

I have been trying to puzzle out the Mail to England question, as it will affect my letters to you. I find that from the place letters go by the China mails, which call at Singapore, alternately by the French & English steamers, & by this route, they should get to you earlier, than if sent through Calcutta, but still there will be delay, I mean gaps, in the weekly supply, which I warned you in my others, must take place whilst I am at sea. For instance, we passed a mail steamer going out, just as we were sailing in to Rangoon, & now we have passed the China mail homeward bound yesterday, just before reaching Singapore. So there would be a week missed, between my last from Hazaribagh, & the next from Rangoon, & now, I fear, there must be another week missed, between the Rangoon letter, & this from Singapore. However, there may be a day or two in Singapore, after this goes, when I can write a line or two, & leave behind me for the next following China mail.

Did I tell you, the programme of the trip had been a little changed from Rangoon. Instead of going to Mulmein & Penang, this steamer has carried on direct to Singapore, and time has been saved a little. We intend calling at both those places going back, however, so I shall see them all I want, I dare say. We have had a very quiet time lately. Only passengers are the old Dr & myself, & going back I may be alone. The Dr.

finds that I am not as good fun as he expected. I beat him at Bizique, & he did not want to play any more, & then he taught me Ecarte, & I have beaten him at that.

This is now Saturday 23 Oct, and we have been lying at the wharf in Singapore, ever since the morning Wednesday 20th. I put off writing any more in this till I could, and learn all the wonders to tell you of, but it has not served a very good purpose, for now I am seedy, the effect probably of being on shore. You know how I get seedy just after coming ashore. Yesterday I was too miserable for anything, was feverish, & such a face ache, & today though better, still feverish, so thus not much fun is in me.

I have been up to the town every day till today, more or less, that is, for a short or longer time. We are lying in a harbour, about 2½ miles away from the main town, as there is a wharf and store houses for goods. Tis not much trouble getting up, as you get into a tram car and do the 2½ miles, in a very few minutes, and have a separate compartment from the odoriferous natives. The tram cars are run by steam locomotion, & they go along gaily at 10 miles an hour, & the cost is 10 cents / 5 pence. It is a very striking sort of place to come to. The people are all Chinese, with their peculiar manners and customs. The Malays, who are the proper inhabitants, are in a very small minority, and there are more Nigapatam Coolies to be seen than Malays. They seem to have been all pushed back & suppressed by the heathen Chinese. All the labourers in coaling the ships & loading & unloading cargo, are Chinese, & splendid men for this work they are. I had an idea that the Chinaman was a little weak sort of chap, but it is not so. The majority of them are undersized, but such limbs I never saw on any sort of men before. Taking a whole lot of coolies together, legs & arms would be a credit to the stoutest Englishman, & the way the beggars work is simply marvellous. They go at a run all the time, & they're always laughing & cracking jokes with each other, however adverse the circumstances.

There is not much here, I fear, that is fit for me to take away under my circumstances. I am trying to get some little things to send in a parcel, but have failed up to now. There are shops with wonderful Chinese & Japanese curiosities, but the price is something fearful for even the smallest trifle. The most lovely thing to look at is a boat loaded with shells. They are wonderfully pretty, but the finest are such that they can't be sent by post.

I have seen Chinamen feeding themselves with chopsticks, & tis certainly a wonderful performance. In their hands, they are just as good as knives & forks, or rather like two long fingers. They use both in one hand, & they open & shut them, and clasp the food like a pair of tongs.

The Dr has gone off, and is living on shore. I see his servant coming now to the ship, so he cannot have departed on a further voyage, as he thought to do. He has a fortnight longer leave than I have, so if the next following steamer sails on its proper day, he'll reach Calcutta time enough. I have been past the hotel, and it's a very nice comfortable place, & the food seems very good, but I fancy rather expensive, so as I am going back in the same steamer, I shall stick to the ship. I think my *bandobast*, beyond doubt, will prevent my being charged extra. The town and country about are very pretty, and I shall wander further afield another day, when I have shaken off my seediness. We



stop here until next Thursday, & there should be time enough for a lot in that time. If I only had a companion, it would be very pleasant, but I hate going about alone.

I have just written to Arbuthnot & Co, to send you a bill for the amount of balance which is their hands, about £7 or 8. I can't communicate with the Agra bank in Calcutta, except by the steamer, & it could not reach before the 9th Nov, so this £7 from Madras may help you in the interval. It ought to reach you by the mail after this. I was afraid to leave word for the Agra to send before I return to Calcutta, as, until I could get my last pay certificate and draw my month's salary, it would reduce my balance too much.

I have just heard, from one of the officers, that the English Mail by French steamer closes some time Monday, so I shall add a little to this, & post tomorrow. Perhaps I shall be in a better frame of mind. This is now Sunday morning, and I must finish, & get it to the Post Office somehow, as I can't be certain when the post may close tomorrow, and as far as I can learn, the boxes are not cleared on a Sunday. The Boxes are close to the wharf, & the P.Office is 2½ miles away, but it does not matter, as I want a run on shore for exercise, so I shall take, & make sure of your letter going, darling.

I am better this morning, & feel more cheerful, but when I was seedy last week & before that, how I wished I could have had you near me, Oh dear, Oh dear, it is so long to look forward to, I almost despair sometimes. I am getting anxious now for the ship to start back again, so that I may get your letters. The first lot, perhaps the 2nd, are to meet me in Mulmein, and then I shall have something to write about, & I do so long to hear news of you, how Binney is getting along, how Jeannie is since her trip to Yorkshire, and whether you are still working yourself ill, darling. Tis no use, going over all that I think and worrying to hear about, darling. I will write a line or two to be left behind, and catch the next weeks P&O steamer, so as to maintain the connection if possible. We are to have passengers, a man and his wife, decent looking chap enough, Recorder of Rangoon, & probably is a gentleman, but his wife may be a regular fascinator for what I know. Tis pleasanter than being alone with the ship's officers, decent enough people in their way but not the sort I like. I will stop now Pet as it is time to start ashore.

Lots of love to all - Ever your own Fred

*Fred Dibblee is on leave. There is not enough time (or money?) for him to travel back to England to see his family. He seems to be visiting Singapore instead.*

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S.S."Patna" 2 days from Calcutta, Sunday Nov 7th

Emmie darling

This is the 3rd day from the time for mailing this, & I think it will be managed, that there is no interval, between my last, which was left for the following mail at Singapore, & this letter, so that you won't be unnecessarily worried about me.

To give the millieu of my autobiography since my last, which I finished & mailed on 28th Oct. We sailed from Singapore on the afternoon at 2 of that same day, got to Penang on the 30 early morning time, & after a few hours on shore, we sailed again at

5 p.m. for Maulmein. The weather was very fine, & the sea like a pond, and so nice & pleasant, that I could not help feeling, twas doing me good every mouthful of air I breathed.

We had 3 passengers only, besides myself, a judge of sorts, Recorder of Rangoon & his wife, who were both very decent & nice, and a native barrister Bengali *babu* sort of man, who had been *home*, & studied & passed for the bar. He was a well-behaved, clean sort of man, & could talk very well on all ordinary subjects, on the whole. I was inclined to think better of him than one generally thinks of a half breed, that we learn to meet & mix with so often.

We got to Maulmein about 10 a.m. morning of the 3rd. After stopping remainder of that day on board the Arcot, I shipped next morning to the Mahratta, a small steamer sailing between Maulmein & Rangoon. We sailed from there for Rangoon at 10 morning of 4th and reached Rangoon at midnight 14 hours after.

It was very bad weather in Rangoon, rained from midnight to midday, & we were so wet & dirty, & disagreeable in the little tub of a steamer, & it was nasty, too, walking about the streets of Rangoon, so there was very little fun to be got out of it. I managed, however, to get transferred, to the other ship, this, the "Patna", pretty early, so my surroundings were more comfortable, & then I went, & walked, & drove about a little in the town, but, being utterly alone, & the sloppy streets, spoiled the enjoyment.

We sailed away from Rangoon at midnight or 20 minutes in the morning of the 6th. Twas an uncomfortable time rather, as the row, of last of cargo, passengers & preparations, kept up till after we got under steam. There was no such thing, as getting to sleep, till it was all over, so we had a short night of it. Yesterday, after we got out of the river, and got past a long piece of shore land at the mouths of the Irriwaddy River, we got into deep blue sea, and had a little bit of a blow, resulting in several absences from table.

There is an old Colonel, just came down from deck, & is showing us a lot of wonderful Chinese and Japanese curiosities, & it rather interferes with my literary efforts. He is in a great way now, about packing them up ...

[sheet/s missing]

...to justify the hopes we have had of him *[Binney]*. What you now write is very encouraging, but don't forget what I before wrote, darling, to keep a watch on him, & see that the working hours are not too much for him. I told you, of Mr Steven's opinion, that 1 o'clock at night, & there about, gave too long hours for him (if he worked during the day with no sleep), for the commencement of a year's hard study. See to it, darling, won't you? I think, the remarks made by the Haileybury Master, about his working so hard & well, when trying for a prize, is proving to be true, & now that he evidently has his heart in succeeding, we have a right to be sanguine. Tis the greatest possible advantage for him, having you there, & I think the chance of his success probably depends on that as much as anything else, and it will help to bring back to him, the pleasure & value of a home, of which, poor boy, he has had so small a share. Yes! though it is at the expense of so much hardship to me, in having to be without you, dearest, tis a great source of

comfort, to think you are accomplishing so much, by being with Binney & the rest of them.

I quite agree with you, darling, that it's just as well, the Parkers are not going to stay with you. Tis perfectly evident, our own children are as much as you ought to have charge of, when you do almost everything for them yourself. The work is too hard, Pet, & your reward in doing it, for other people's children, could never be the same as for your own. Tell Fred and Tom, I am so pleased at hearing how well they did at their schools. Fred may well be proud at the place he has got, and little Tom seems to be pulling himself together, & getting to be like a boy of his age, and better than one of his size. I hope, darling, you will soon stop sending your letters to Hazaribagh, Post Office Bombay is the proper address, till I write again about it. You seem to have missed what I wrote about it. It takes 2 & perhaps 3 days extra, for letters that go to Hazaribagh, & if reposted at Bombay they generally can come on by the same mail as other letters.

This is now Tuesday morning, and we are now in the river within three hours of Calcutta. I have just been having such an agreeable time packing, & am pretty near melted, & really with not an idea left. I shall put this in cover & keep it ready to enclose the 2nd half of Exchange if I can manage to get on shore and to the Bank before closing time. The Captain promises to get in about 2 so that ought ...

sheets missing

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*sheet/s missing. This letter was written by Fred to Emmie. It is dated around Nov 1886, after his leave, but just before travelling to Mandalay*

... Mandalay. That part of the journey won't be pleasant. We have to anchor amidst swarms of mosquitos every night in the same sort of steamer, and grind along all day lazy in smooth water thick as peasoup, like the Indus exactly. After receipt of this, darling, address me - Mandalay, Upper Burmah. I shall try to recover letters that have now come and are on the way.

Who do you suppose I've just seen? Your old ayah, "Chungoo", (is that the right name?) She has just been here to see your & the children's likenesses. I recognised her, & she knew me at the band last evening, in the semi-darkness. I must tell all about her in my next.

No more paper, got it. Very busy now, engaging servants to go to Mandalay. Wanting Rs 30/- a month, but I promised what is usual. Warmest love to all.

Ever your own, Fred.

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# Mandalay

Mandalay Upper Burmah, 4th Dec 1886

Emmie darling

I am taking advantage of the final moment available today, to cramm a line or two to you, which I fear will not amount to much. I got up this morning in the dim, & went out the lines to start the work, & have had a 14 mile ride. Got home at 11, & had scarcely time for breakfast, when I had to start and walk to the palace, to attend the Committee on the "Defences of Mandalay", from which said Committee I have just returned, 1.45.

There is such a lot to tell you, & I have so much to do, that I can scarcely make a beginning. In the first place, up to now, I have been very well. As we rode out this morning, we had two mounted *sepoys*, armed to the teeth, riding behind us. One chap was to attach himself to me, and did so, till his pony ran away with him. The Chief Commissioner read me quite a sermon, of the most impressive kind, on the importance of never going out without an escort, & I have 2 *sowaries* mounted men and two foot *sepoys* to watch over me.

This is Monday morning, & my letter must be posted this afternoon, & I have such a lot to do, that I fear you will fare badly.

I have got a house, the funniest thing you ever saw, built, of course, for Burmese occupation, as there were no white men here a year ago, and I am trying to move in tonight, though I scarcely expect to succeed, as my cook has gone off to the town to find a carpenter, & has not turned up after 4 hours. How he can expect to have my dinner ready. I don't know.

I am staying now in a house, near to ruin, which appears to be of the few which escaped the fire set by the *dacoits*, immediately after the place was taken. One half of this fortified town (which is about 1½ miles long & broad) was set fire to, and being all of wood, it soon disappeared. Now the place is to be cleared off, & kept free from natives altogether, for cantonments, and even the few remaining houses will be knocked down.

We had a very pleasant trip up the river, 3½ days steaming from Prome, where we left the railway. There were lots of soldier men near, & police men on board who had been through the Expedition, & every scrimmage (there were no fights) was fought again, and described with reference to the places on the river as we came to them.

There was an awful lot of troops in the country, and more coming, and parties in expeditions are being sent out in every direction, to try and catch gangs of *dacoits*, whenever they can hear of them. There does not seem to be much enthusiasm, and all the officers are disgusted with running after a lot of Burmans, who disappear in the jungle, or perhaps when they are found, they are seen ploughing in the fields, and doing the peaceful citizen business.

I won't attempt to describe this place now. Tis all very strange, and so different from India. No ladies are allowed to come up, and you see the men riding or walking about of an evening, with anything but a gay appearance. On the arrival of the steamer,

Sir Charles Bernard came up to me, asked if I was Mr Dibblee (who evidently was expected), & bid me come up to the Palace, where quarters for the time would have been found, & I should have been his guest. But afterwards Bagley, the executive working next to me on Survey, met the Chief, & said he was going to put me up. Sir Charles not dissenting, I came here. They say it is much better, as I never could have had a chance to see people, contractors and others, in any comfort, as the quarters are formed, by putting up mat bamboo partitions in a great empty wallless building & part of the palace.

I feel wretchedly lonely, & half the time miserable, & just at this moment, I'd give half of my possessions to have you with me, darling. There is not a soul, in whom I feel any interest whatever in the country, and tis so wretched, being so utterly alone when surrounded by lots of people.

General Chesney, Military Member of Council, was a passenger in the steamer coming up here. He is supposed to be the biggest swell going, next to the Commander in Chief. You remember his coming to our house in Trichy, don't you darling? I introduced myself, and he remembered all about his being at our house better than I did, & we had many long talks, & games of whist together, while the voyage lasted. He embarrassed me considerably, however, by trotting me out to everyone in the immediate vicinity, as Chief Engineer of the Mandalay Railway, and I had to explain to his secretary what my position was, to prevent the appearance & suspicion, that I was trying to sail under false colours.

They say, I shall be worried half out of my life, by being so near the Chief Commissioner. Indeed, he has commenced already, & as he is a lean figetty irritable man, with a bad digestion, & a deficiency of common sense, I quite foresee a good deal of dig and bother. It is the most important division on the line, however, and my getting it, instead of Owen, is a compliment to me, and it is a comfort living in a place, where one is not actually surrounded by *dacoits*. Although we do have to go through the form of being "escorted", all say there is absolutely not the least danger of *dacoits* showing themselves here now

I hope you forgive such a bad letter, so short, darling. I must stop this very minute and attend to business letters & matters.

My warmest love to you, ever your own Fred.

*Sir Charles Edward Bernard was Chief Commissioner of Burma.*

~~~~~

Mandalay 13th Dec 86

Emmie darling

This is the last day for writing. I did not intend putting it off, but yesterday afternoon, after a lot of office writing work, I was very seedy. A feverish attack came on, & I have been asleep almost ever since, that is, I slept, till after 8 this morning, from about midday yesterday. I have got my assistant, Mr Newham (do you remember him at Hazaribagh?), & it is less low than before, but one can't feel cheerful and feverish at the same time. Newham, of course, will not remain here. He is to live about 12 miles away, but till some staff come for his assistance, he can do no good by going out.

The Chief Commissioner is going out the line, too, to see the progress which I have made - two days earthwork, & if he continues the same system throughout, I shall have a fine time of it. I am not much enchanted by the prospect before me. They seem perfectly indifferent, in India & at Rangoon, about sending the man I want for the work, and no one but an assistant engineer has come yet, no accountant, clerks, store keepers or subordinates, & I have a struggle to get anything done, as I have to do it myself. I have just finished being badgered by a pig-headed Dt Commissioner, have written him three letters, without his being able to grasp a most simple fact, when I want his assistance.

I fear, there will not be much of interest in this letter, darling, but you must pardon me. I have so much work & worry, that my poor head is simply spinning, & I feel capable of doing nothing but go to sleep.

Another interruption here, to do some work, darling, & it will probably be the same for the rest of the day, so you will have much to forgive.

The strangest thing, about this place, is you never see a lady or indeed a white woman. I saw a coffee coloured one a few days ago, and was quite startled by it. The wife of the Commissioner of this District thought she'd take the law into her own hands, and started from Rangoon without saying anything. When she got here, it was discovered her husband had gone off somewhere into the Wilderness. She, I believe, is the only white woman in the place. It is forbidden for them to come, as their lives are supposed to be worth saving, while the men must take their chance.

I have the second of exchange for £100. The original, I have no doubt, has reached you long ago, but this had better go to prevent accident.

Newham has just gone off to call on the Chief Commissioner, and after he returns, there is more work to do, so I must push on with this. Owen has arrived in Rangoon, & I am in hopes, your box is with him. I have not heard a word from Parker, or from Owen, or Christi. I am coming to the conclusion that other people are as prone to put off writing as myself. We only get letters once a week, and one naturally expects a budget. Yours, of Nov 4th, came to cheer me, but no ordinary friends sent me anything. Nov 4th must, I think, be the next to last that is due, & there must be another in India on the way. The Post Office here is dreadful. I have had letters lying undelivered 4 days. One fancies there must be a good many lost.

There is a great lot to write about, darling, if my intelligence was up to the mark, but my head is so muddled, that I should not find two words to put together, if I attempted anything like a description. At the time of your letter, you did seem very cheery, darling, distempers & fevers of sorts. It is awfully hard, that fever should stick to you so persistently.

I have just heard from the C. Commissioner, that he will not be able to go out the line tomorrow, & I am rejoiced. It would have been a grind getting up & starting away at 5.30 in the cold, & afterwards the exposure to the sun would have been, I fear, too much for state of seediness. Newham has just returned from C. Commissioner. He apparently had a very narrow escape, from serious injury. The Chief's digestion was more out of order than usual, apparently, & Newham says he was reprimanded for all the sins

of omission & commission, which the Gov. of India alone could be held responsible. Newham is rather thankful for having escaped alive.

I must off now, darling, & wind up, in case I cannot return to this.

My warmest love to you Pet and all our dear ones, Ever your Own, Fred

Emmie's recent letters to Fred have had to be redirected, and are probably wandering round India!

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Mandalay, 19th Dec 86

Emmie darling

If Owen will only stop talking for short intervals, I ought to manage a pretty good letter for you this time. I am better of my seediness, that was coming on bad when I last wrote. All sorts of good luck has been happening to me for the last two days, & subsequently I feel considerably uplifted, from the slough of low spirits that I was in. Upon my word I don't remember ever feeling quite so down in my luck. The last bit of good luck has been the receipt of the birthday box, and all the nice things in it. That water jug painted by Jeannie is perfectly charming. It has been special admired by Mr Newham, tell her, who is considerably an artist himself, & disposed to be critical. He says apropos of "Nora Creena" that "her ear was too small", so the praise of the vase is all the more valuable. Oh dear, oh dear, that such magnificent things should be exposable only in Mandalay. Let me know if the vase has been cooked, & consequently if the painting is not liable to injury. If not baked I must be the more careful that it does not get soiled and injured. The pretty little "Nora Creena" will be nice on my table. You must give Tom a half penny for the knife. Bessie was a partner with Jeannie in the Nora Creena, thank her with my love. Binney, I suppose, gave those "Knives of Hearts". They are the same as used to be in the study, are they not. The handkerchiefs are a perfect blessing. Most of my others are disintegrated, will barely stand being taken out of my pocket, if taken hold of by one corner. It was like your thoughtfulness, darling, to know I should want them.

I wrote above that all sorts of good luck had happened to me. Well, I had not written those words 5 minutes, when I discovered that my laundry had again disappeared. I suppose stolen by the same manner as before. I believe, tis not well to boast of good luck. I found two pieces of my luggage after a fortnight. They had been left on board the steamer, because my name could not be found. Fortunately, I at once applied to the steamer people, and they were on the look-out for it.

I have been interrupted dozens of times since I began this, & have not done as well as I expected. Owen came up on Friday, and I am putting him up in a fashion. There are three of us here, & this place is not big enough for one. There was originally one square room, with a long narrow one beside it only 8 ft wide. Then a wooden partition was put up, & cut off 8 ft from the square room, & now forms my bedroom. Tis only 8 ft wide, & about 24 long. There is a sort of bathroom attached. For the other, original narrow room, there is no bathroom, and I have had to cut a window down at bottom, & make a door of it, from where goes a staircase to the ground. All the inhabited rooms are

about nine feet from the ground. In most houses, this lower nine feet is left open and unoccupied, or used as stables, but here they are walled in, a brick wall built round the wooden posts of the house, and I intend using the place as an office for the *baboos*. By the way, there are no *baboos* here. The Burmen are all called "*Maung*" meaning "Mr" or Indian *babu*. My clerk is *Maung Choe* (Choe being the name). I have a subordinate *Maung Tso*. The *Maung* must never be omitted which is rather a nuisance.

Did I tell anything about the town? The house I am in is a brick one, that is, brick outside, but supported from the ground by wooden posts, & with wooden floors. The outside brick saved it from being burnt, when the whole of this part of the town was burnt down by *dacoits*, soon after we took possession. There is a wall, 30 feet high and 1¼ mile long, on each side of the square. All inside that is called the City. In the very middle of that is the enclosure of the Palace, which is perhaps ¼ mile square. The walls of the Palace are as high as the City wall, but not so thick, and there is a stockade of teak wood outside the brick with a space between. The buildings of the Palace are, in their way, magnificent, carved in the most wonderful way. They are nearly all gilt from ground to the top. In most cases, the gilding is but little injured. It will, of course, get shabby after a time, & then must look bad. On the outside, there are inlaid, especially about the top of the spire, little exterior pieces of looking glass, which reflect the sun, and look very brilliant whenever the angle suits for reflecting the sun. They say, there are lots of very valuable jewels up near the top, but of course you can see nothing of them from the ground. They have the bottom part all partitioned off, and forming offices, & Mess rooms, & quarters for the staff to sleep in. Every here and there, you see some special magnificence. The Chief Commissioner dining room, for instance, is very nicely decorated and painted, & some of the Mess rooms give an idea of the original use of the place, but, as a rule, there is nothing apparent, but an idea of discomfort and unfitness. A man's room is a great big space, surrounded by bamboo mats. A corner is sometimes screened off to form a bath room, but the bed and sleeping appliances are always in evidence. There are only one or two European style of houses in the place, and there was an awful disappointment met me. One of the few houses, fit to live in, came in our Station ground, and the land was to be taken up, but the powers that be decided that the Station site must be changed, & I am to be driven to the same expedients as others, adapting Burmese architecture to English notions.

I am going to start some of the permanent buildings at once, & have it to live in, if they only will settle how things are to be. The notion, at present, is that all the native houses inside the walls of the City should be knocked down, and the place levelled off, cantonments, offices, quarters and Civil Lines to be built in certain parts, and the rest to form big parade grounds, allow no one but servants of the Sahibs to inhabit inside at all. This, however, is only as yet a recommendation of a committee (of which I was one), & will have to be confirmed by Govt. of India.

In your last, darling, (12th Nov) you wrote in such a funny way, but now it seems to have been almost prophetic, about being sorry that I came on leave to Burmah, & being afraid of my being ordered here. Of course, sending us civilians (and no soldiers)



here is all said to favor them, & treat us badly, but at the same time, there is nothing for it, but obey. It cannot but be a reflection on them (the R.E's), and me, coming without objecting, ought to do good when the time comes for noticing it. Particularly, I don't think much of the danger, darling. The people at this end seem quiet enough, & they give us all strong escorts, & we need not do any amateur *dacoit* catching ourselves. That is foolish and dangerous, & seems to take some fellows' fancy, but it's not mine. A good many civil officers have been shot, at that sort of work, but they had no business there, & if they did it for fun of the *shikari* in the thing, they deserve no sympathy. The soldiers are, of course, expected to do it, and are paid for it.

If you could have come out from home now, & been with me except for my being here, I should have thought it very hard, but as that could not be, & now that I am here, I don't think much of it. They give us no allowance, that is, they give me none, no one, drawing 800 a month or more, is allowed anything extra, but that we have made our minds up to trying to have altered. Our living is more than doubled, everything at war prices, our distance from home very much increased, & our comforts are almost nil, and work is hard, I am forgetting, however, darling, thought I was addressing the Chief Commissioner on the "Rule of Land and Sea", who could & would, if so persuaded, give us extra allowance.

This is now Monday morning. I have been out out to look after some work, and had a long ride. Have now to settle down and write a lot of letters. We have only a weekly mail, so correspondence work gets rather jammed, on the last day of the mail. I think, I must stop now, darling, tho there is such a lot to say, it is better to make a completion, than put it off till I am busy. Owen is just in the agony of getting his carts started in a three days march to his destination, and is hanging about, going to start himself after breakfast. I intended finishing on that other sheet. I have overdone it. They are sitting down to breakfast.

So with warmest love to all specially to you, my darling, ever your own Fred. My landlord has been christened Ko Ko. He was Theebaw's "Lord High Admiral" and also did a good deal of business in the executing way I understand.

*If someone gives you a kife, it was supposed to cut your friendship. So you gave them some money in return, making it a transaction rather than a gift.*

*Fred has got his Gilbert and Sullivan a little muddled. In the Mikado, Ko-Ko is the Lord High Executioner of Titipu, while Pooh-Bah is Lord High Everything Else. Theebaw was the last king of Burma.*

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Xmas Day 1886

Emmie darling

I am determined to begin today, & hope you will fare better than you have lately in my letters. I started the morning with the intention of taking a holiday pure simple, & devoting considerable of it to you, but I only got so far as to stop in bed an hour later than proper, when I was raised by a peon bringing in such a pile of letters. I read and enjoyed

yours, & was going to let all the rest slide, but was brought to my senses, by the reflection, that there were things expected by steamer, that had to be taken out, that Molesworth (who is here now) was leaving tonight, & there were many things to talk to him about, & to do so usefully, I must read all my letters. Therefore here I find myself at 1.30pm, only just free from a long spell of office work, after the talk afore mentioned with Molesworth.

He has just arrived from a march through the country, along which our line is to be taken. He could come through only with a very strong escort, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a regiment, and the country has never been passed through before. The physical difficulties are, he says, nil, but how they expect to build the Railway, when the country is so infested with *dacoits*, that it can't be surveyed without a military guard, is a puzzle to me. Molesworth does not seem to have troubled himself much about the R'way. He never saw any of the engineers, who were waiting to meet & inform him, about everything. He sent no word after first starting to me, & after missing all the others, he passed round my division, in a boat by the river, & a branch many miles away from the line, & the first experience I had of him, was when we went round & examined the beauties of Theebaw's (the King of Burmah) palace. I then met him at dinner at the Chief Commissioners. Since then we have had sundry talks, & put matters in a more satisfactory condition.

This is now Sunday morning, & the day is to be devoted to writing of sorts, there being a lot of office writing to do. Molesworth went away last evening, that is, he went with the party, Chief Commissioner etc on board the steamer, to sail this morning for Rangoon. I am rather glad to be rid of that Commissioner, he did worry so. I am rather muddled with a lot of business things that have to be written about. They will come into my head, & I have to note them down, & consequently cannot get into the frame for writing this.

Before I forget, I must tell of my want of success in inducing Sperry to search for that Trust in Fort William for Charlie Parker. I was introducing the subject, & he said he would not undertake it. The only thing now is for me to do it, the next time I get to Calcutta myself. I told you I think that I only got your letter about it, the day before I sailed from Calcutta, and when I had not a moment to spare. It will probably take several days to make the search properly & some correspondence. I will do it the first time I get the chance.

I had not much of a Christmas day. After what I did then, I discovered there was something more to talk about, & started off to the palace to see Molesworth, and was then kept till after 5pm, running about from one man's room (office) to another, in a most distracted manner, & when the day was done, I was dead-beat.

The date of your letter was the 18th-19th Nov, & I was so glad, darling, to see you were well, & in good spirits. I can see it at once in your letters, darling. Poor Fred. I am glad that he came out of that business so well. It is really better for the boy to work these things out through his own agency, & in the regular legitimate way, & it won't do him harm, but on any future occasion, if I hear of more of it, Mr Ash had better be told that, as my boy is smaller than his confieres in the school, & not able physically to resist

undue bullying, I will take him away, & put him elsewhere, where is likely to be surrounded by young gentlemen, with more sense of fair play. The idea of the poor boy being compelled to associate with young ruffians, who have to be publically flogged, to make them behave like gentlemen, is a little too much for me to stand. If I hear more of it, and the arrangement of the school won't permit of his being separated from the young blackguards, I will take him away. Do not let Fred know what I have above written, but I want Mr Ash to know. Give Fred a tip from me of £1 if you can manage it, Pet, and say, with my love, I am proud of his having conducted this business so well, as to be applauded by the others, whose good opinion is worth having. Now that the thing has been brought to notice, if that particular bully does not stop his operations on Fred, there need be no sense of dishonor in him telling of it. I like this boy doing manfully what he considered honorable, not complaining, but there is no necessity in keeping that up any longer. Let him tell you if it is continued, & you write to Mr Ash.

The weather here now is very nice, much cooler than anything on the plains of Bengal. The latitude is 22°, very nearly out of the tropic, and there are high hills on the East and West & North, with the sea not very far off on two sides, so the climate ought not to be so hot and enervating as India, even in the hot weather, and it certainly is cooler than most places, except the extreme north, in cold weather. I shall try and send a map some day. Binney & the rest can study the geography of it.

I get, from the Brigade Major's Office, every morning, a bulletin, as it is called, with the news of what is going on, in the military world around us. They have detached parties out all over the country, to suppress the *dacoits*. This morning, we hear that they have nearly got to the ruby mines, which was being held by *dacoits*, got to an elevation of 5500 ft above sea level, & taken (that is they walked into) a very strong position, from which they saw the brave Burmans moving away. In another place they attack some *dacoits*, that they manage to catch up with Cavalry, & killed 32 of them & took four prisoners. A few days ago, they made a great capture. The Cavalry caught a lot of them in the open, & rode them down, & killed over two hundred. I believe, it is the only certain way of curing a dacoit, to kill him, and the other inhabitants seem to understand the principle of it too.

I am putting up my Xmas presents for the house, a lot of dried Lichis. They come from China, & were presented to me by Chinamen carpenters, who are working for us here. They have lost most of the delicate flavour that is so nice in the fresh fruit, & taste now too much like raisins, but still, I dare say, you will appreciate them coming from here. The cook says he makes a stew of them, and a Marang [*meringue?*] tart. He has been ordered to try this evening. I have my table camp writing table decorated with "Nora Creena" and the "Knave of Hearts" when committing the Felony and when repeating. They make firm paper weights, & so useful in the moral lesson they convey. I have the Camp pin cushion also, but I think, you were shabby in not giving me more pins. There is only enough to ornament, Pet, now, & you might have sent 1000s. With pins at war prices I shall use all you have sent, however, & then shall import some more. I must not forget to tell I have Jeannie's "jug" on top of the table in front of me. I had a bracket

made for it, but the *boy* takes it off to use it for a lamp. I shall another one made, however, specially for the "jug", & line it with red material, I think, one of the Burmese ladies silk handkerchiefs, which are such pretty colours. It is twelve o'clock, & I must get at my business letters, & tomorrow if I get the chance I will add a little more.

Love to all to yourself specially my darling, Your own Fred
I had Lichi stew last night, and it was very good, though certainly not much of the lichi flavour. They should be soaked $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. Probably I shall not be able to write more, darling, as I have such a lot of office work.

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*This letter was written by Fred to Emmie, dated around early Jan 1887.*

*sheet/s missing*

... disturb me from my present place as early as other people are turned out. The square, that I am in, is to be set apart for Ecclesiastical buildings, & they are not in a hurry about them. Did I ever describe my residence? There is one fair sized room 23 x 16, and two long narrow rooms on either side of it. The principal entrance, originally, was a trap door & a ladder in one corner of the room, and there is a similar trap door in each room. I suppose, the idea was to dodge the *dacoits* or earliers of some kind. The windows are all barred, & some of them have iron covered shutters, I suppose, to prevent playful friends firing through it. There is no glass. The house is made of wood, that is, it is supported on wooden posts, with brick walls round the outside. In most cases, they make holes in the bricks, & fasten them on with nails. I wonder, sometimes, if there is reason in this? That there are, or expect, earthquakes, so make the wooden structure to withstand them.

They seem to be making good progress in clearing away people and houses. There are several large squares cleared up and hurdled off, I suppose, after the first rain, will be covered with grass. This will be one of the largest cantonments in the Indian Empire, and, surrounded by light walls & fortifications, should certainly be considered the strongest. It is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles along each of the four walls. All the native inhabitants are to be cleared out and made to live outside. All the shops & manufacturing people are also to live outside.

I am so glad, you continue to give such good account of Binney's determination to work hard. It will be such a triumph if he succeeds, & such a comfort to you and to me. We have indeed reason to be thankful, that they are so good, & industrious, & favourites with those they are associated with. I think they are both, more than can be mentioned, benefitted by you being near them, encouraging and keeping them straight & up to their work when necessary. I sometimes think that Binney's chances would be small, if you had not been near, and I often think that there is reason to be thankful, for our being induced to go home just when we did. I have much to contend with that is discouraging, but it is a bright spot that, which we have reason to think, will end in our boys' success.

I am enclosing the second of Exchange this time, & there will room for but little more, & it really seems as if I had little to say more. If I get the chance, I may add a sheet more tomorrow, but there is such a lot to do.

All my love darling to you and the dear ones, Fred.

Emmie darling

I must begin today, tho it will not improve the quality of this epistle, being so overwhelmed with work of various description. I am rather muddled. I was just going out for a walk, when the *chupprassies* & mounted policemen burst out in a state of excitement, & rushed after us to say that the *Burra burra Sahib* was here. We turned back, and sure enough, there was Sir Charles Bernard, rummaging about my breakfast room, writing notes at my desk etc, & in a great state of excitement, to hear what the news was in R'way matters. He has been away since Xmas day, & was consequently boiling over with questions.

The chief is here still, but is laid up in bed with fever this morning, & there is not much good to be got out of him. However, I have got a good measure of satisfaction in the way of starting things, & see my way to affecting something very shortly. The subordinate, who was doing earth work, has failed me rather, by getting ill.

This is now Monday morning, and I think I have not been so late before, with such a small amt of writing to you, darling, since I came here. Tis bad luck too, because I was quite seedy this morning, & have only been keeping alive, because there was so much work to be done. The Chief is going away this afternoon, & there will not be such a hurry skurry next time, I hope.

I am all alone today. Newham has gone out to work at the big Bridge, 11 miles away, and I am in solitary state in the house. It is a degree of grandeur I don't appreciate. It makes me feel my loneliness so much.

I must not write another word before speaking of your letters, darling. I thought, there might be a double set this time, as you would just then get to know of my coming to Burma, but the delight of getting two such jolly cheerful letters, & when you sound so well, Pet, was more than has happened to me for a long time. I sometimes feel almost nervous in getting your letters, the fear you will be writing that you were seedy again. I was glad too, darling, to see that you took my having to come to Burmah so quietly. I was afraid, darling, that you would be overwhelmed with it, from the way you wrote in a former letter, on the subject of my coming here on leave. I am not so dissatisfied as I expected. The expense of living and everything is very great, and I get nothing extra for it, but the country is not so bad. I feel that if I only had you here, Pet, I should be all right. You, all of you, seem jolly. & determined to enjoy yourself in the proper manner. How I wish I was with you, darling.

Here I have been interrupted for an hour nearly, & I am regularly muddled, with so much work of varied sorts going on at once. It is a shame that you should be made to suffer, however, for it, when you deserve such a nice long cheery letter. You must forgive.

I am send 2nd of Exchange for £30, which you ought, by the way, to have had two mails ago. I must not, however, omit this document, after the Experience of year & half ago. I also am sending, book post, a bamboo full of photographs. You and the

children will be amused by them. I want them particularly to notice Miss Prime Minister's cheroot. That's the correct size but they are sometimes longer. I smoked one once half down, and then gave it away to a young lady in the street. She was delighted with the attention, and at once began to smoke vigorously. Ask Jeannie if she would like some. She might like to introduce the fashion to her friends. That is rather a nice group (now I should say) of Mr, Master, Mrs & the two Misses Woon, not forgetting grand mamma. Thibaw and the two Mrses (tis not a word generally used in the plural) Thibaw are rather good. He was the fat idiotic looking dolt, you may see in the likeness. That rest house is just what you can see all over this country. Look at the carved wood work with a magnifying glass. It is really very beautiful, and perhaps that sort of work is the best thing Burmese can do. There is some splendid work in what is called the incomparable Pagoda. There are dozens of sort of panels carved in complete figures (standing out from the plank three inches) representing stories from the sacred writing.



Here I have been interrupted again. I have been trying to persuade myself, to send you home some silk things, but the price is ridiculously dear, & unless I can get something particularly excellent, it will be too much extravagance. I never saw such wasteful extravagant money spending people anywhere. It is said that the men sometimes gives Rs 100/- for the silk petticoat sort of garment they wear from the waist down. You can judge from that, this is not the country for cheap curiosities.

They have been catching and killing more *dacoits*. By the news this morning, at or near Yamethin, they discovered a lot, & killed three *Blios* (a *Blio* being a dacoit General) besides a lot of ordinary cut-throats. This place is quite close to where one of our Survey parties is at, and the said Survey party had a guide all cut to pieces a short time ago. They all however report that the country is becoming quite quiet. I rode out the other day with a loaded revolver on my belt, but I got very tired of it, and the next time it was left at home, & my protection was entrusted to the two mounted policemen, who compose my escort when I take my rides abroad. The other day, I saw a Commissioner, a most palpable civilian in the "cut of his jib", going about with a sword as well as a pistol. I suppose, it was intended to terrify the enemy, but in his hands, it was not likely to do him much harm. Molesworth too had a spick & span new infantry sword. It seemed very absurd, but possibly tis right they won't go for a white man armed. I feel almost as if I was contumacious sometimes, in consideration of the regulation to go around armed. The other day I was in a committee of half a dozen soldier men & civilians, & I was going about without even a walking stick, no weapons in fact but my fists and tongue.

Tis getting late now, Pet, and I fear to put off closing this, lest office letters come on me, & prevent returning to it. I am sorry to see the Bill of Exchange is now at a new place, & I dare say, poor old Pet, you have been bothered tremendously in finding the place, and getting the money, but what can I do. I must stop here.

Lots of love to all. Every your own Fred.

P.S. Tell Fred I am much pleased at his having such a good report. "Lost ideals" was very well written. Evidently the Eldest Son is a long way ahead of the school boy I used to know. Thank Jeannie for her letter. All with my love, FLD

*"Contumacious" mean stubbornly or wilfully disobedient to authority. It seems to describe Fred quite well! "The Eldest Son" is Binney.*

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This letter was written by Fred to Emmie. It is dated early Feb 1887.

sheet/s missing

... and he was greatly taken with it, read it through, & then went back over it again, and told anecdotes of his school & examination days, which bore upon the subject. It made me feel quite proud of B's effort. There was one piece of news in Parker's letter, which ought to prove good to me. He met O'Callaghan just from home, who had been ordered to Calcutta to be made secretary to Govt. of India PWD and it is said with a view to his being D.G.R. He was one of my best friends. We were always chums when near each

other, & if he does become D.G.R., it should bring good to me. Gen. Hancock is not to be there long, they say, as if he becomes Lieut. Genl. he will have to give up and retire. I wrote him a long letter about my case, two or three mails ago, but there has scarcely been time for a reply, if he devoted any thing like trouble to look up and understand the case. His idea was to wait til Hope went, which takes place in July, but it may be that he (Hancock) will be going then, if not before, himself. If now O'Callaghan succeeds him, I can not but think, I shall have fair play to a certain extent.

I don't know, darling, why it is that I am writing so melancholily. I am well, and not a symptom of fever about me, strange to say, but I feel that I want to talk over things, & things for which I require comforting, with you, Pet. I have arranged to sell my horse, as soon as I can secure a Pony to carry me about. Punch (that is his name) is an awful bother to me. If he does not have constant exercise, he gets as bobbory as possible. In fact he wants more than exercise. Hard work is the only thing to keep him within limits. He dances about, & plays tricks all over the road. I have lost my fancy for that sort of thing, and I cannot spare the time to ride him a long distance every morning, whether I want to go out or not. So I'll get rid of him, and take to a sober pony, who thinks of nothing but going to his journey's end. I have heard of two or three ponies, but have not been able to get hold of them as yet. I am making a second attempt this morning for one of them, & the second candidate I hope will come. I heard of him only last evening.

Your last letter, darling, was 6th Jany, & there about. You seemed pretty jolly, but, as I had prophesied, had had a bad time in the interval from your last previous letter. The young people seemed all pretty jolly, & to have had a fairly good Christmas. It takes just 2 days less than a month, to get a letter to or from here and London, & I suppose, counting the intervals between your letters will help to make the time pass. I seem so much farther away from you, Pet, than I ever was before, & then the prospect of your getting to me seems so faint. I don't see how you can come here. I have once or twice thought of building a house big enough for us to live in. Matthews won't hear of anything bigger than our Assistant Engineers *bungla*. I have thought, if I only could get a house built to live in, I should surely have a transfer, and that a consummation to be desired.

"Breakfast ready on table sai" pronounced behind me. Here it is now 5p.m. I made a solemn vow that I'd do no work today, but it was all nonsense, saying anything of the kind. I have done nearly a full day's work. I am now bathed, & dressed, & had a half formed determination to go to church, but am not sure that it will come off. I don't care to go to church alone. It sets me thinking to no good result.

I must not forget to acknowledge "Bab Ballads", & I read it at intervals with great enjoyment. "Cook & the Captain Bold & Crew of the Nancy Brig" etc was duly found on night of arrival. As to Uncle Remus, I had read it before, but read it again, every syllable, and enjoyed it tremendously. Fred is very like me, & like my poor Father, in his enjoyment of anything of that kind. I'll never forget the way he used to laugh at Artemus Ward, when his Goaks first came out.

I have just heard, from up the line, Newham has just got 800 coolies to work, & they have been collected by a *bandobast* of mine, made without the C.Commissioner first

being consulted, and which has since been pooh poohed by him as useless, utterly useless. Meantime, he made a *bandobast* which ended in no coolies coming to work, while mine has succeeded. I am afraid to go near the old man, but send messages through the Secretary to Govt.

This is now Monday morning, have been out till eleven and I am now waiting the Cook's will & pleasure to have breakfast. I have been pretty busy all morning, & had a long ride, & for the rest of the day, shall be driven out of my head nearly with work, so I could not do you any good by trying to write more. There were one or two things that I thought of, to write about, but they have escaped me. I had been intending to send home my two watches, but, on looking at them, to see, if possible, what was the matter, the big silver one began to go himself, & has been going ever since. I think I shall send the other, however, but it must be put off till next mail. No time now to pack it up. Thank Jeannie for her letter with my love, but I can't manage another this time. I must try and get some more photos of the place for you, if I can.

Now, with lots of love to all the dear young people & to you, darling, especially.

Fred seems to have forgotten to sign this letter.

The Bab Ballads was a collection of light verses by W. S. Gilbert. "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell" tells of meeting a sailor who claims to be

*"Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig."*

When this was queried, he explained that he was ship-wrecked with all these people. They ran out of food, and started to eat each other. He was the sole survivor, so contained all the others.

Uncle Remus (1881) was a collection of African-American folktales adapted and compiled by Joel Chandler Harris.

Artemus Ward, nom de plume of Charles Farrar Browne (1834-1867). "Goaks" is a (deliberate) mis-spelling of "jokes".

"Bobbery" means fidgety.

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Mandalay, Saturday 26 Mar 87

Emmie darling

I am beginning this evening, just for the sake of having a beginning made, but as it is half past four, and I have still work to do, I shall not be able to effect much. I rode in from Myobingye this morning, and was a little tired, 10 mile ride, and tis real hot weather here now. The mail arrived, with such a lot of letters, that I have been too busy to take a proper rest, & I want it, getting up at 5.30. I have pretty well made up my mind to have a Europe morning tomorrow, and not go out on the work, & so leave time to sit down quietly, and write, & see if, perchance, I cannot do better than I have done of late.

Something has turned up always, just at the time your letter was under construction, & spoilt it.

I am glad to say, I am not so much down in the mouth this time, although I am surrounded by melancholy people. I am not quite right in that, perhaps, as some are in good spirits, from the fact that they are going away, but others, that are to remain, are melancholy, if you like, & most of my associates, or people I generally see, are the melancholy parties. Oh how I wish I was out of this, or going away as some people are. I must stop this strain however, or else it will be a infliction on you.

It is now Sunday morning, & I have done no work in the most deliberate way. I went up to the palace, in hopes of being cheered up, but you cannot conceive a more melancholy set of men. The only cheerful ones are those who are going away, and the cheering up has been a failure, among other misfortunes.

Both my servants have said they wanted to go (Mothers being ill). I would willingly part with them, but I can't get any others. If I had been able to, I should have taken the initiative and dismissed them. I told them they could go, when they brought me others, & that they could not go otherwise, but Oh, tis such a bother. I never was intended to take care of myself, & it worries me, when I have so much work to do.

I have been inquiring about the means of getting here from home. They tell me, there are steamers sailing to Rangoon direct, & I have sent for particulars, but you must not decide about coming yet a while. I am going to make an attempt (if such is possible) to get away. I detest the place, & if I could but afford it, I would take furlough, for the sake of getting away. If however I am (beyond possibility of avoiding it) to remain, you must come, leaving the details to be worked out hereafter. The proper time to come will be not earlier than October. I am going to try & get sanction, to build a decent house that we can live in. The small affair, which is now sanctioned, won't do for us & the girls. Don't get into too much of a state of expectancy, darling, nor let the others. So much will depend on what happens here, and with you at home, that I hate to talk about it. I shall get away if I can, & if so, you must wait until I am settled elsewhere. Jeannie spoke about this in one of her letters, showing that it is being thought of, but you have not mentioned it. Some day soon, I expect to hear you have planned it, & worked it all out, & now you have something to go on, only for the misfortune of its likelihood to be all upset. I possibly may have something more to tell next mail or the mail after.

Buyers, our new chief, is expected here by next steamer, and my hope is that something will be settled, which are now hung up for want of orders, & because of Matthews (the old chief) going away. He was very ill some time before he left, & he could not attend to anything, though he had the will to. I believe, he made himself much worse in his illness, because he was unfit for work, & wanted to do it. The result was, however, that my work has been in a state of almost stop.

I had such a shock yesterday, when the accountant, who is a European & particularly respectable, was standing near me. I perceive a most suspicious looking scaliness, & sores in the joints of his fingers. I wrote him a note, & recommended, for his own sake, that he should consult a Dr at once, and, at the same time, to inform me, if it

was in any way contagious. It would be nice to have an attack of itch prevailing in the office.

It is now 4pm, & I have just been reporting a *dacoit* incident. Eleven miles out from here, where Newham lives, on the river side, the sub-overseers house was entered by *dacoits*. The man was cut down with a *dah*, a government rifle was stolen, two coolies were cut up, and some money, ornaments and clothes were taken. It was business on a very small scale, but my fear is, the work will be deserted. There are 1500 coolies at work, and there is a river between them and the Police post which is stationed there for protection. There are large sums of money paid to the coolies every week, & it might be a temptation to loot them. I am not going to allow the subordinates to live among them any more. It brings it home to us, that we are in a disturbed country, although the cutting up of two coolies, and wounding and robbing a sub-overseer (Burman) is not much of a political business, & can only be important if the work is interrupted. I should not be much surprised if they had trouble in carrying on the work farther away. There is a talk of our Chief marching down along the line of the Railway, for which operation, half a regiment is required for protection. Each Executive Engineer has 150 to 200 men, as an escort to his party. The Chief Commissioner was preparing to go down the same route, but that, I believe, has been given up for some reason.

We have just had a slight shower of rain, which is always a benefit in laying the dust, & since, there has been wind blowing in every direction, so it is several degrees cooler. I shall go out directly, & see the Scr. to Govt. concerning the *dacoit* business. The letter on the subject went for the C. Comm. information a little while ago, and then there will be something to talk about.

This is Monday afternoon, & I have been seedy, & not able to write a word. Your last was 22nd to 24th Feb, but there is nothing to answer in it. Love to all darling. I am not brilliant enough to write anything worth reading so I'll stop.

Lots of love, Your own Fred.

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Mandalay, 3 Apr 87

Emmie darling

You deserve a nice long letter, this time, for having sent me such a nice one, dated March 1st. You seemed in such good spirits, and everything around you seemed to be going so straight, that it quite set me up. (I find after deciding to use the phrase, you had used it in your letter before my eyes.) I had not time to look at a private letter yesterday & day before. The Chief and Examiner were both here. I was out with former all morning & all day. Examiner was in my office. Now, this morning, I have been in the Palace, seeing after many things, Military and Police proceedings & other matters too numerous to mention. A good deal has happened since my last.

We had a *dacoity*, on the works 10 miles from here, where Newham was. A native suboverseer's house was attacked by 8 men, armed with dahs (native swords) and spears. The sub-overseer was wounded and knocked down, & his wife was taken from him, and all his property looted. Two coolies, who were sleeping outside, were cut up, so

that one of them afterwards died. This created good deal of excitement, and correspondence voluminous. I was first told, they could not give me more policemen, whom I wanted to patrol up & down the line at night. I should say, by the way, all this happened, about 200 yards from where Newham slept peaceably in his house, surrounded by 35 policemen of sorts, but there were none between. There was a large collection of men, about 2000, nearly all of whom were imported from afar, and we were afraid that they would all bolt and forsake the work, which would have been a dreadful calamity. We were getting on particularly well, at that particular place. The work was commenced last of all, & after vain efforts to make a start, I tried a dodge of my own, for which failure was prophesied, of importing coolies from afar, and I got them, and an enormous quantity of earthwork was accomplished. Now, to have the work deserted, because these brutes can't resist the temptation to cut each other up, seemed very hard.

But another, worse business than that, is on hand, & required no end of a *bandobast*. We got news, that a regular plan had been formed to attack our settlement Myobingye, near where we are building the Bridge, and another place, with 1200 dacoits, there being 4 *Boks* (Captains) with 300 men each, who are well known. Well, it was all arranged, and one of the village headmen, who is a converted dacoit but did dissemble, went to the Asst. Commissioner, & revealed the plot. This news was sent to us, & I no sooner got it, than a mounted messenger was sent off, straight to the Secretary to Govt., & a demand for European soldiers and an officer, to prevent an attack being attempted on our work. I startled them, & sure enough, they gave me what I asked for, & yesterday morning, they marched out with all their bag & baggage, arrangements for bringing away wounded men, ammunition, provisions etc etc. I am now in great hopes, they will give up this project, & not attack at all, or turn their attention to some other villages, where they burn & destroy Burmese inhabitants as much as they can find opportunity for. The Head of the Military police is now lamenting, that the men were sent out too early. If they had waited, they might have caught the beggars after they had collected and moved off, & then got behind them. There is something in what he says. They might have been more sure of a bag, but my aim was to prevent the attempt on our works being made, & let them take another opportunity for catching the dacoits. The European soldiers, as I said, were sent out to our village, and a lot of cavalry & some rifle/foot were sent off in another direction, to catch some, if possible, when running away. I also made an arrangement for Newham, & the Europeans to escape, if the dacoits succeeded in burning & sacking the place. I got the steamer flat (the steamer that has been given to me) anchored to a long cable in the middle of the river, & then made fast to the stern, protected on sides with sleepers. All, that there was to be done, would be to step on board, & cast off the stern fastening, & the flat would immediately drift out into the stream. This latter business, however, won't be required, I fancy. I don't think, the scoundrels will have pluck to attack the post, with European troops out in it, or try to burn down the village.

There has been a considerable gap here. Had breakfast & sleep, and did a lot of things, including letter to Bank sending cheque for my pay and asking £30 to be sent to

you, Pet. The second of Exchange for £75 is enclosed. I suppose & hope, you got the first all right, but tis never safe to omit sending the second.

By the way, darling, I forget, that is, I fancy I remember without being quite sure, that you gave notice of taking Bessie from School. I am somehow reminded of it. She would do well enough, by keeping up useful studies under Jeannie at home, and the saving can be made useful in other ways.

I must not forget, the Parcel came by last mail all right, darling, it was so nice to get it, but it made me long so to be with you. All the things are very nice and useful. The soup would cost, I suppose, three or four times what the packages would come to. The price does not appear on the package, but it says, a good basin of soup can be obtained for 1 penny from which I argue, that is the cost of a packet.

It is getting on now to 5pm, & I must go and tub, & get ready for church. I am getting to go there every Sunday evening, and it helps, I think, to cheer me up. Oh! tis so lonely here darling! I intend writing some more tomorrow, Pet, if I can manage it, but although I polished off most of my correspondence yesterday, it may be, something may turn up to prevent my having a moment to myself.

Love to all, yourself especially Darling, every your own, Fred.
P.S. Monday afternoon, not time for more than a word or two, being desperately busy with my correspondence. I am feeling in better spirits, & no feverishness today, and have done a good day's work. What about Scholarship? Is there not one Fred could try for? Is there not one Binney could get, if he went to College? Think this over, darling, & make inquiry. Your own, Fred.

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Mandalay, 9 April 87

Emmie darling

Tis Saturday afternoon, and I am going to just make a beginning, to prevent the danger of your not getting a letter. I am expecting a guest, the Examiner, and I supposed I should be pretty well taken up with him, but I have just heard, by some telegraphs, that he is ill, & coming in by steamer this evening. His being ill will keep him, probably, in the house, but he would not require much attention, so I dare say I shall be able to write in quietness after all, it more than is permitted now. I have been interrupted 6 or 7 times so far since commencing this.

I must begin, by easing your mind about the *dacoits*. Not one put in an appearance, and all of our people are still alive. It created quite an excitement, and every one was agog about it, but whether it was merely a sham (false report in correct English), or whether they were made aware of our preparation to meet them, the attempt was not made. I went out there, two days after it ought to have happened, and the military element was very strong. An English officer, European soldiers, a lot of mounted police, beside foot police *wallahs*, and there was marching and counter marching, in a manner which showed the *dacoit* friends, if there were any looking on, that we were not going to be *dacoited* easily. The Police and the soldier authorities are disappointed, at nothing having occurred, but my idea is to prevent them getting a taste for attacking the Railway, & the

next time anything is expected, I hope it will end in the same way. I could not go out, because of Buyers & the Examiner being here, but I am not at all sure, that I should have gone in any case. There is not, at my time of life, much fun, in being disturbed at night, by being shot at, or by having the house set fire to over one's head. I don't consider it part of my duty, to attend to the Military defence of the works. This would have done fine for Mrs Parker, to talk to the maids about. You might tell her, you are sorry it ended so tamely. She was right, however, in saying I was in a hostile country.

I must not forget a funny incident. On the evening before the expected attack, Brown the Examiner was walking about the room, and I was writing to Newham, about having succeeded in having the Military sent out, and asking to send me early news, whether any thing happened or not, & generally about dacoits, when suddenly there was a loud report as of a rifle fire right into the room, something breaking, & things flying about. I turned my head, with the idea that some one had fired at us. Brown was still standing up alive, and I certainly had not felt being struck. It turned out a bottle of soda water had burst. Did I tell, by the way - we have increased comforts (necessary almost now the weather is so hot) soda water and ice, former from the Artillery Mess, latter made by at the Brewery where they brew beer for the soldiers.

This is now Sunday morning. I have been devoting my energies to the service of Govt., from 5.30 up to now 10.30, all the time having the intention to do no work, whatever. That sort of thing with me never comes off. The Examiner, & another man, are here now staying with me, & it makes it a little pleasanter than my ordinary life, which is so lonely. As I said yesterday, the Ex. came in ill, but is better now, & there is much more fun in him.

The weather is getting frightfully hot, and I don't feel quite sure, how we shall get through it. There is no glass in my quarters, and the wooden shutters have to be kept open all the time, or else sit in the dark. A humidator might do, as the air is so dry, but it requires too much personal exertion and trouble, for me to undertake it. With all this work I have to do, I find it necessary to rest when I get the chance. I have started a new dodge. Somehow, I manage to go to sleep earlier in the night, and consequently waken earlier in the morning, am up generally between 5.15 & 6 am, and then, after breakfast, consider myself entitled to two hours rest, & I try to go to sleep, not always successful however, but it prevents my feeling so utterly down and worn out, at the end of the day.

I have a sort of half formed idea of going to Church this evening. I went last Sunday, strange to say, and now the Ex, who is a great Church going man, will probably confirm my wavering purpose towards Godliness. That wretched young man Wally won't come home to breakfast, & I am beginning to feel a sinking under my belt, so 5 minutes more and we start without him. When *chota hazri* is at 5.30, 12, which is my usual time, is too late for breakfast.

I stopped here for breakfast, & have since had a snooze. I feel much refreshed, but without an idea capable of being put here. A funny thing has happened to me. I have a genuine cold with the usual nose phenomena. Tis a thing that has not happened to me for a long time. Generally tis fever, you know, Pet. I have done pretty well in way of holiday

today, done positively no work since 10.30 and am not going to do any more. One of my guests is sleeping peacefully, but I expect him soon to waken, & expect *tiffin*, & then his talk will utterly preclude any more writing here.

The date of your last Pet is 8th to 11th March. You all seem to be getting on well. Tell Fred I am pleased, beyond measure, at such a good report. There is nothing he can do for me, that is better than deserving such a report as that. I can quite understand, darling, "the anxious time" you speak about Binney. I feel anxious too. He has been doing so well heretofore, however, that we ought not to feel our hearts sink, as you say. Keep up, my darling, it won't be long after this reaches you, before it is all decided. Tell Binney, I have great confidence in his succeeding, & I shall not allow myself to be low spirited, or think he is going to fail. Thank Jeannie for her letter, and say I hope to manage a special to her some day, but tis difficult always to do it. She seems very hopeful about her plaque, & I hope it has cooked well at the last warming up. The vase, on my shelf before, was much admired yesterday by a friend who came in, and I dare say the plaque will be pretty, even if it does not win first prize.

I am sorry to say, I don't understand the silk subject enough, to decide the question in her favour against your opinion, but they tell me, the prettiest and finest made Burmese silks come from Manchester, and they are a good deal the cheapest too. There are silk looms hammering away. Women work at them all round us here, day and night pretty well, but labor is not cheap here. The people are not industrious, and won't work steadily. As they will only work half their time, they expect double wages for the time they do work.

I must go and tub now, as it is getting on, and the other men are likely to want to do so too. I must start before they propose it, & then there is only one tub, and it won't hold more than one man at a time.

Lots of love darling to all & to yourself especially. Ever your own Fred. I will add something if possible tomorrow but must not run the risk of leaving this without a finish.

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Mandalay, 1 May 1887

My dear Binney

I must enclose a few lines to you, in Mother's letter, but they will be few. You must get, from her, the ordinary sort of intelligence which I have to send from here. I was sorry to find that you are not so sanguine, or so certain of success, as you were last term, but I think you must not lose heart yet. The game can't be lost until it is played to the end, and to judge from what you were able to do, when you commenced at the special training, & the great improvement in number of marks, which you appear certain to be able to count on, I cannot but think that most of what you have acquired may come to the front, when the time comes. A great deal must pass from your mind, necessarily, when you are working away at such a lot of subjects, and you may fancy they are lost, but you often find, they are merely stowed away. You must struggle on with hope to the end, & having done your best, leave the result to a higher controlling power than human effort. I

shall always be convinced that, be the result what it may, that there has been no want of will and effort on your part. I feel this from what Mother writes me from time to time, & what Mr Gurney wrote, & which I got (copy) last mail. Should it prove, that the special training, you are now having, has been too much concentrated, & to be concentrated on too many subjects at a time, to permit of your mind retaining it, & bringing it up when wanted for your examination, it will be deplorable, but I shall never shall think you are blamable. From what you wrote, & from what the Masters at Haileybury used to write, I know you are capable, and specially capable of putting on a spurt as you did getting in the prizes you tell of. And now, what I am in hopes of, is that just when it is required, your health may be equal to it, & you will get through. You should keep up with your courage, and never allow yourself to think you are going to fail. I don't believe you will. You must (as I know you will) be guided by Mother, in taking care of your health, when it is of so much importance, & think of little details which may upset you, such as catching cold etc. As a whole, I think it bad advice, to tell a young man to coddle himself, but now the circumstances are special, and you cannot be too careful. Now my dear Boy, with much love, I wish you success.

Your aff Father F.L.Dibblee

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Mandalay, 8 May

Emmie darling

This is Sunday morning. I had a fixed purpose to do nothing in the way of work, so to begin, I tried to make a Europe morning in bed, but failed in that. I got up after many efforts to lie still, & found it 5 minutes to 6. Then I went out loafing, & rather overdid that, as it was nearly 9 when I got back, & when I prepared myself to begin this, I found Cooks etc staring me in the face, & thinking it would make me feel better to have it now, I tackled it, & lo it took me exactly one hour to make it straight.

I am all right, not a bit seedy but nothing seems to go straight. The wind throws the papers about, among other things, in a way that's very irritating & not justifiable, but I forgot the greatest source of irritation however. I have lost Vic again. The little beast drives me wild sometimes, by going & being friendly with everyone. She'll go & jump up into anyone's lap that may happen to be sitting down, & will make friends with anyone, *Tommy Atkins* or other who may be passing. This morning I was loafing in a man's room at the R.E. Mess, & just opposite, there dwelt a lot of *Tommy Atkins* R.A., & I believe they have got hold of her. I shall try the same dodge as before, ask the commanding officer to help me, & perhaps they will give her up. Do you remember once writing to me, replying to my remark about Vic being so affectionate to me at the first? You wrote, you did not believe in such affection. You are quite right. Neither do I now. The little beast would just as soon be petted by anyone else as by me. It is a great trouble & if it was not that I am fond of the little beast, I'd just let her go & be done with the bother of her.

I have gradually got into a regular habit, having a man to dine with me one day a week, and dining out at the R.E. Mess one day. It makes a break in the monotony of my



existence. Tis pretty hum drum I can tell you. There are two days a week partially occupied, by riding out to the line & back again. There is not much excitement about that, but it gives me a *pucca* holiday from office work. After breakfast, I recline with a cheroot under the *punkah*, and spend hours in that peaceful manner, deliberately doing nothing. The exercise 11 mile ride does me good, & the freedom from office work *diq* does me more good, I think. A long day in the office, without ceasing, makes me feel very used up at the end of it. Newham is coming in this evening, & it will be quite a festival, with the other men coming to dinner.

I am getting out of ideas somehow, but I must struggle on, and with a letter, even without ideas (you are pretty well used to that however). What with Newham being here, and Monday being the last mail day, I cannot look for a minute to myself.

What do you suppose has just happened? Vic has emerged from beneath the *almirah*. She had run away from me, & come home, & has then laid concealed for two hours. The place looks big enough only to take a cockroach. How she gets in, I don't know, but there she was, for over two hours, while the *Bearer* was searching the whole place for her, & came back protesting that she could not be found. It is a relief. Now perhaps things will go better with me. The papers certainly do not blow about so much as they did.

By the way, an event occurred since my last. I suppose I said something about it. My *Boy* Choomoguici has departed. He deliberately stayed away from his work for many days, & when the Hosp. Assist. went to see him, he told me that he only wanted to get away. I cut his pay, however, for three days, & now he has gone. I got another man, a Musselman, & not much of a man. He seems fairly intelligent, but lazy, and is continually forgetting to put things in their proper places, which is uncomfortable, as you know, but I shall work steadily at him, & hope to get him into a groove. He is not likely to want to run away, I think, as his brother is at service here, & he, having come up with some other Sahib, has taken service again, & I don't think he has any wives in Rangoon. I must tell you an amusing thing. Sometime ago, I got a telegram from --- (some native woman's name) saying, "Got very danger diarrhea send back my husband Choomoguici tomorrow". It did not do much good, as I tore it up.

I met Owen last week, & he had been very seedy himself, and then everyone of his staff are down with some sort of distemper, Assistant Engineers and Subordinates, the whole lot. There is a talk of giving me additional 10 miles, & adding a bit to Owen's length southwards. I have not heard anything officially, but I don't want to be bothered with it. The country, I should get extra, is all paddy land and very feverish. Of course, if they give me staff men to do the drudgery, the work would be nothing, but, I fear, they want me to do it without staff.

Tis now afternoon, and I must write more, so as not to leave it to be finished tomorrow. Tis very hot, but a breeze is blowing, & I have all the appliances for keeping cool in force, to wit, I am in my shirt sleeves, & with bare feet, sitting under the *punkah*, & opposite where the wind comes from (tis a hot wind, tho), & I have just wetted my head again.

How the people in the palace must be suffering. They don't get a breath of wind there. They say, the C Commissioner is to come up later on, and bring Mrs Chief. More house is to be built, so I suppose it must be so. It ought to make the place pleasanter, but I doubt if he will entertain much, or do much to liven the place.

The date of your last, darling, is the 6th to 8th April. You seemed to be in fairly good spirits about things, darling, although you had been & were seedy, & it seemed to me to be just one of those times, when you would have been better if we had been together, and one of those times, when I could have been better if I could have your comforting. Tis cruelly hard on us.

I am so glad to hear such a good account of Fred. There is no doubt about it, he is above the ordinary run of boys, & I am so pleased when you say, he looks well and healthy, because one always feels nervous, lest the brain runs away with strength of constitution, in cases like his. We have, as you say, a great deal to be thankful for, in our children, altho there are other things that might be considerably improved. The children have much to be thankful for, in having you with them, just at this time, although I am the sufferer for it.

I can't write about Binney, darling. I feel there was nothing to be done by me but just wait. By the time this reaches you, it will be very near the crisis, & then'll be anxious times for me waiting to hear. I try not to think too long at a time about it.

There is nothing much to answer in your letter, nor does it help me in composing this, so I think you must be content with these three sheets. By the way, I almost forgot, the next time you send out anything, send without fail another of those chains for keys, with the leather tab for button. I promised another friend, to get him one. As you say, I am getting pretty bare of clothes. Everything seems to be going into rags, & I don't know how to move to remedy matters. I think I'll take stock some time, & get you to make me an outfit.

Now, darling, love to all, especially to yourself, my Pet. Ever your own, Fred

*Vic is Fred's dog.*

~~~~~

Mandalay, 14 5 87

Emmie darling

You will fare badly this time, & it will hardly be considered my fault. All sorts of things combine. 1st the monsoon arrangement of steamers begins today, & the steamer sails tomorrow morning, making it necessary to post this tonight, instead of Monday night. All my office correspondence, for the week, has to be crowded into a day and a half, & that keeps me as busy as I can be. I have such a lot of work staring me in the face.

I was storm stayed out the line, & only got back yesterday morning, having been away from office two days. We had tremendous rain began Monday night, when there was such a downpour. It drowned out our major Bridge, & will put us back considerably, & the road out, which I had to ride, was as near impassable as one could imagine, for about a mile. The whole country was under water, & I had to ride through 15 inches of

water, with a lot of mud under that. How my pony got through is a marvel. The night after I left home, it came onto rain in torrents again, & I decided not to try the return journey, but the night following, there was little, indeed no, rain during the night.

"Mealy" (pony) had rather a bad time, but I got through eventually. It has made a great improvement in the climate, ever so much cooler indeed. When the wind blows it's quite pleasant.

Your last, darling, is dated 11th to 15th April, & it seemed so nice & peasant, that I was cheered and set up considerably. You all seemed well & so jolly. Binney, although you don't quite say so, seemed to have been put all to rights by his holiday, & I am in hopes that, as the term is not so long, & the time before the Exam so near at hand, that he will not have time to work himself ill again. It has been too painful for me to think of, during the last week. Although I tried to write cheerfully in my letter to you, and the effort to do so did me good, but the truth is, I did not feel cheerful a bit, & afterwards, I could scarcely allow myself to think about it. Now I feel better and more hopeful.

The things in the box seemed all there, darling, from your list, but there can be no doubt whatever, that it must have been opened, after it left me, & before reaching you. They need not have been alarmed about the Cartridge - it would go off, & if they look at the cap, they'd have seen it. If I remember aright, it was one that I tried to fire & it failed. The enamel of my watch was not broken, but the colour was out of one of the figures. It was stupid of me putting in those white elephants. A Chinaman carpenter brought them that morning, when I was packing the box, & the box being too big for the things I had, the temptation, to put in the elephants, was too strong for me. I put the cartridge in to the parody teapot. 'Tis too bad to have things treated like that, but I am too far off to do much with a complaint.

I was stopped here, for work and for breakfast, & have, since then, had work pressing in on me till I am fairly bewildered.

It seems, as I feared would be the case, that the extra remittance for school bills was late, & I am so sorry, darling, but you managed beautifully, and that you would do so, has been my comfort, ever since my calculation showed me, that the money would be late. You are a dear, good old Pet, & I can see plainly, that you must have been keeping back from me the state of anxiety you were in, about the money being late. I have a great deal to be thankful for in my wife. God bless you, Pet.

I was interrupted just here, with a whole lot of complicated a/cs business, causing a lot of worry, and a good deal of time used up. I very much fear, you won't get more in this. I am always thinking of urgent things, that have to be done by myself, independent of what the office brings me. I shall be a little less troubled by my work next week, as a lot of things are to be left over, & dealt with leisurely, as it is quite impossible in a day and a half to do it all. I may have time to add some more but if not you must forgive. Love to all, and especially to yourself, my darling, Ever your own Fred.

I do feel ashamed at putting this into the envelope, but there is no help. I got the song all right, Pet. Time has come for mailing this, and not one moment have I had for a line, so it must go in this state.

~~~~~  
Mandalay, 21st May 87

Emmie darling

I believe you will be worse off, in the matter of a letter, this time than ever before. All things have conspired to bring it about, & I am so sorry. First I was storm staid at the Bridge 10 miles out yesterday, & could only get back late last evening, after such a weary ride through the mud. The mail (incoming) is a day late, having been detained for English mail at Prome, & now I am sitting here, the day half gone, and such a pile of letters & correspondence to attend to.

I had to go out, early this morning, to see what had been done, in my two days absence, at unloading a locomotive and train, & found most things going wrong. Our subordinate, who ought to have been helping, was not present, and I afterwards discovered him helpless in bed, & if not absolutely drunk, not recovered sobriety. He was a special man, of English training, found & sent me by the Chief's Office, & now I suppose, he must be discharged. The other two people, who ought to be working together, were snarling & quarrelling, like two angry cats in the preliminaries to a fight. All this necessitated my personally going to see after things, and being out an hour longer than I intended. Now I am writing away as hard as I can scribble, trying to get something down, before I open this office *dak*, as unless I do, there will surely be something to take up my attention, and preventing the possibility of my writing another line.

I have just been interrupted, to make notes of something that was passing through my mind, which required urgently to be done. Now I have had interviews with several people, of great importance to them possibly, but to me has had the effect simply of wasting my time. Tis so tiresome. I have sustained myself with a bottle of ginger beer, two mangoes (not very good) and a high tumbler full of *Bael fruit sherbet* (I don't think you know that?) but I find, my innards get troublesome, if I defer breakfast much after twelve. Now all my official letters must be opened, and partly disposed of, before breakfast, so I must drop this for a little, & try go at it again. My accountant has been ill for three days, & is unable to get his accounts ready for this mail, & that will give me a free 2 hours more than I otherwise should have.

We have had very heavy rain lately, having the effect of stopping all work, and our major Bridge has been drowned out, to my great annoyance. Without the stoppage, I should have got my platelaying over the whole length down, on top of banks, finished long before anyone expected it. I am, however, very much pleased, at the progress of a wooden bridge which is being done. They all prophesied that it could not be done this season, & advised not trying it. I said I would, & now tis nearly finished. There are only 17 piles more to drive, which ought to be finished in a week, and those piles are the only heavy parts of the work. When this is done, I shall have communication through my division, and onto the next, & I think, much earlier than anyone expected it.

It is now half past four, so not much more time for writing. I have been overwhelmed with work, and have to go out again, over the line, this evening.

Your last letter was 20th-22 April, and I was immensely cheered by it. You had been seedy, darling, but said you were better, and were evidently up to enormous work. Then it was cheerful to hear that Binney had become sanguine again. The late doleful surmises were very worrying to me here, at such a distance, when I had no means of judging for myself, as it were. We must simply be patient, & trust that some good fortune will happen to us. It will be good fortune indeed, if he succeeds.

I was agreeably surprised to hear that the extra remittance of £75 had reached you before it was quite too late. I fear, you were a little worried about it, Pet, and have been smothering it to me. I will try and do better next time & hope you forgive.

My head is too full of my office work to write much more. I see memos all round, of what I am to do, and there is but little time to do it. I have this morning received an offer, from Buyers, to be transferred to Rangoon, but I have not quite accepted. I should be glad to get away from him, but don't feel sure what the move might lead to, and to tell the truth, I don't like Buyers. I fear it would not be pleasant, to be closely associated with him. We shall see what comes of it. I hate this place, & want so much to get away, if I could see more clearly ahead. Don't be in a fright, darling. I want the change, but, till I can see the way to improving matters, I won't take action myself, to bring about the change.

I must stop now, darling. Forgive short letter, all my love, Ever your own Fred.

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Mandalay, 3 June 87

Emmie darling

I ought not to be doing it, but I just cannot resist the temptation of beginning this, even if only to the extent of a few lines. Tis in the middle of office hours, 2.45, but the office has ceased from troubling for a short period, & I am trying to fancy there is nothing to do. They have commenced tho, just here brought up cheques to be signed, and questions to settle.

I have just had the pleasing intelligence, that they are sending me one assistant engineer, who, to my mind, is as as objectionable a young man to have continually to associate with, as can be found in the service, & I really don't know what arrangement to make for him. He may do his work right enough, & that may compensate in a measure, but I can not be sure even of that. By the way you know of him, though you never saw him. It is that Mr Alexander, of whom I used to write on his doings at Hazaribagh. He is the most distaceful young man I ever met. I should have had anyone decent, to have here with me. He is to have the home subdivision, and we must be continually together, every day & generally all day. Oh dear! Tis bad luck entirely. I have not even an office room, in which he can work separately. I wish I knew and thought better of Buyers. I would ask him to exchange him with some one else, but I don't care to do it under the circumstances. Perhaps the reality will not be so bad as the anticipation.

Just then I stopped, & never a moment after that, during the whole of yesterday, did I have to myself, and I fear there'll be little leisure for me today. Among other things,

Buyers has written me a long D.O., which has to be answered, & will take much of the time I would have devoted to this.

My move to Rangoon has come to naught. I should perhaps say, I caused it to stop myself, as I thought it would not quite suit me, to be in such very close contact with Buyers, but the fact remains, that there is one extra Executive Engineer on there. I, after feeling my way a bit, shall try to bring it about, that I shall be available for transfer, and get out of this if I can. I don't mind being here a month or few more, as I incline to think tis cool during the very hottest part of the season, that is, the hot season of elsewhere.

The first few days of May were hot, but on the 9th or 10th, a tremendous downpour of rain occurred, & there have been showers and some heavy downpours since, and it has been pleasantly cool all the time. When the wind blows ever so little, the weather is delightful. Just at present, it is so. They say, there is not so much rain here, & a good deal of cloudy weather. I am bound to say, though, there has been, since it began, what I should call a good deal of rain. Night before last, there was an awful thunder storm, such thunder and lightning. A soldier was struck and killed in the palace, 200 yards from me.

I hope, now, for some fine weather, as it is hindering my work terribly. Two Bridges, which are in hand, have been stopped, and drowned 4 times, & they just get ready to commence again, when down comes the rain. Any rail laying too cannot make progress. The bank gets so soft, people cannot walk on it. If I only had a little fine weather, it would all be done in a few days. I am not at all sure however that trains could run regularly. The trains have had to stop, that have been laid in a *Kuchcha* fashion in another Division, so I don't so much mind.

Before I forget it, as I have done two or three times, did you read a letter from correspondent in Rangoon, in Pioneer Mail May 4th? I think it is called "a plea for Rangoon". It is very well written, & describes things exactly as they are. Must stop, darling, & do some office work.

Tis now after four, dear, & I have been busy as a nailer ever since I stopped this. The letter to Buyers, four sheets full, took a good while. Then I had to write another D.O., announcing the serious illness of my accountant. Then a telegram came from the Marine Transport, asking for help to recover a wrecked steamer, & in short I am nearly distracted, & no head left.

Your letter, which came yesterday darling, was 2nd to 5th May. You sound in fairly good spirits, although you had been seedy & well again, more than once, poor old Pet. Tis a cruel hardship on us, both being away from each other at these times. I should like so to be a comfort to you, darling, & there are so many times that I require comforting myself, & feel the want of you, so much more than ordinary. I feel the want always, darling, but want comforting sometimes more than at others.

It was sad to hear of Miss Binneys' sorrow. She would feel her brother's death more than many people. I have a lot to write about, darling, but it's all jumbled up now, & there is such a pile of letters that require signatures. Depriving me of Sunday, for writing

in, has been a great privation, & a cruel thing for you, Pet. I have not written a decent letter since.

I had a long letter from Parker yesterday. He sends his kind regards, and many kind messages which I have not time to look up. He is determined to stick to our Friendship apparently, and we write to each other with fair regularity.

I was cheered up, darling, to have such good news of all our flock, of Binney being in good spirits about his chances, of Fred being all right. Thank Jeannie for her letter, & say I will give her a letter direct some day, when circumstances are more favourable, but they are the reverse of favourable now.

I wrote to the Bank to send the £30, & it ought to go by the mail which takes this. Must stop now, dearest.

All my love to you & the rest, Every your own, Fred. Forgive

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Mandalay, 10 June 87

Emmie darling

It is only for form sake, and nothing else, that I am trying to make a beginning this afternoon. Your letter only came in at 3 this afternoon, after expecting it early this morning, & I have been as busy as it was possible for any man to be, ever since, & before that indeed, all day.

Tis now time for me to take my tub, and start out on the work with Alexander, & show him what there is for him to do. I see plainly, he must start at once with his work, and not have time to get into idle notions, if I am to make him useful. I have not quite got over the feeling, with which he impressed me before, but if he does his work properly (of which I don't know anything as yet), I dare say I shall not dislike him so much.

This is now Saturday morning, darling, and I am alone, Alexander having gone out to take charge of his work, & I, being feverish, stopped at home. I am not in good spirits just now, having had fever, more or less severe, for three days, sometimes being almost knocked over with it, then again picking up, and going on with my work. When Alexander once gets into the way of things, I ought to have an easier time of it, provided he can do his work, and tries to do it.

I have the horrid dread before me, of failing to get one big Bridge done and the rails through this season. We have had such frequent heavy downpours of rain, the work has been, over & over again, drown out and stopped, and each time, one or more foundations being just short of being finished, then struggling away again, till another flood, & now I fear the stream, which runs through, is too much for us, cannot be shut out. The Contractor, who has this work to do, is a poor creature, and could be induced to hurry in the early part of the season, & now, just when we want him most, his health has broken down, & he has left his work, and gone away. I am anxiously waiting to have a report this morning, when it will decide whether the work is possible or not.

Your last letter, darling, is the 12th & 13th May. I was so glad, to have you write your health was better, darling, but I had not suspected, that you had been so seedy, before you spoke of it, Pet, but in a way to make me think the seediness was trifling. That

was your artfulness, I suppose, darling. That's a facer, Gurney saying the chances are against Binney. Oh dear, coming when I was not feeling up to the mark, struggling with my work. It will all be over, before this reaches you, and tis no use speculating, as, with Gurney's letter, the speculations cannot be pleasant. I suppose I shall hear what is the final result, about a month hence. I sometimes have thought, it would have been wise to have arranged a telegraphic address, through an Agent, so you could have telegraphed, but if it is going to be failure, tis scarcely worth while. I must just try & not think of it, till the time for your letter comes. I don't feel like writing much, Pet. You all seemed going on smoothly, but I can't but think, you had inward struggles, over that note of Gurneys. Suppressing it & keeping it from Binney, & working on as though all was right, was like you, dear old plucky Pet. If all depended on your exertions, pluck and perseverance alone, I am very sure there'd be no failure, & it is perfectly certain, that, if by chance he does succeed, it will be due to your being there, near him, all the time. I am glad to hear, he is hopeful himself, as in that, I think, is his best chance. If he felt failure was probable, his chance, I think, would be utterly gone, from what you have, from time to time, written about him.

I wrote to the Bank to send the £30/-. I hope it will go all right, though they have not sent the second of exchange.

We are now a little better off, & our correspondence is less burthensome. There are mail twice a week with Rangoon, so I can write business letters any time, & have them go without fear & anxiety of delay about them. Just now there seems to be an epidemic outburst of mistakes, by inefficient subordinates. One man got sacked by the Chief, another got drunk at a very critical time, and neglected some important work. My head clerk has been absent for a whole week, & is popularly supposed to not sober during that time, and another subordinate had to be recommended for dismissal, as utterly useless and unfit for service, while a fourth has been clearly induced to resign. I have never been so unfortunate as to be saddled with such a lot of useless subordinates, & it's just as well that we are getting rid of them.

You ask me what I think of Jeannie's letter writing. To tell the truth, I like it. She expresses herself very clearly, and in few words, but, in writing polite letters, when note paper has to be filled up by saying nothing, I dare say you are right, & that she wants instruction and practice.

I was stopped here for work, of which I have had enough, & no mistake, being just dead beat. Tis after five now, & I must stop.

All my love, Pet, to you and to ours, Your own, Fred.

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Mandalay, 17 June 87

Emmie darling

I am just making a beginning this afternoon, during a lull, but the word was not written before the lull was over, and I find there is work enough to keep me till dark. However I have a notion that I will stop in tomorrow morning, & take time to write to you deliberately.

My work is going on pretty well. We have had quite a long time without rain, and our former dread, that we had been definitely stopped, has vanished. Most things are so far forward, that we can scarcely be stopped, even by the highest flood.

Last Monday, I brought up an Engine and train into Mandalay, for the first time, and the wonder of the aborigine was something to behold. I went down without speaking to anyone, ordered steam up, & came on the Engine 2½ miles from the shore to the station. The whistling was heard, "& round about, from every side, the wondering neighbours saw" (I believe that is quoted wrong), but every street we crossed, you could see them streaming along in crowds. Thousands of them, I suppose, saw an engine for the first time. The people were a little savage at my not making a fuss over it, but, as you know, I don't like celebration *tamashas*.

We have also got a start made with our big Bridge, and I see my way to completing the programme, of wonderful Railway construction performance as far as this Division is concerned.

Mr Alexander is come, and is **domiciled** with me, & I grieve to say, with every prospect of being permanently so. He is not so bad as I expected to see, shows that he grasps the fact that he is under my orders, & has set aside the truc which I formerly noticed in him. At the same time, there are many things which **grate**, & I have the feeling that I have to make the best of things, with an effort.

Your last letter, darling, was 17 May, Binney's birthday. I must be honest, Pet, and say that I did not remember it. You know, darling, how bad I am at those sort of things. I remember yours, but seldom remember my own or any one else's.

I was stopped here by my work, and tis now Saturday morning, & I am stopping in from work, specially to have time to devote to this, but fear there'll be no very brilliant result. I was awfully glad to hear of Binney being well, and in such good spirits of his birthday, and all surrounding seemed so joyous. I cannot write much about him, darling, the great question of his prospect in life has by this time been settled, & here I am in doubt as to how it is, & it will be a month before I do hear. It seems to weigh me down especially when feverish and seedy. There, I must just wait.

It was all a *banao* (made up story, you know) about Owen. He never was missing, & no *dacoits* ever interfered with him. There is a local paper here just started by a low ignorant half caste, who continually writes about all sorts of personal matters, his news coming from the bazaar. He is always making ridiculous mistakes, and people print them out and make him angry (the editor I mean). The worst of all this is that other papers got hold of what appears, and, being eager for news from Mandalay, the Pioneer & Calcutta papers copy what they happen to see. It must have been very annoying to Owen. I suppose however none of his people at home would see the Pioneer.

I have just accomplished what I have been labouring at, for every so long, got a telegraph office open in my office, in communication with "The Shore". It used to take half a day, to send and get an answer over those three miles, and a telegram by the Govt. wire generally took as long. Now I hope I can do business more promptly. It looks like work now, when I have a telegraph, and a locomotive & train at my command.

I was stopped, for sending telegrams and writing a letter, & my head is so muddled, that the letter had to be written over & over again, & I was not satisfied with it then. They have an expression here, as every where else in this part of the world, you know, Sind head, Punjab head, Delhi head. Here it is Burma head, & they think it original. Well, I have Burma head and cannot work anything out to a definite result. I wish I could go to sleep, & sleep until your letter comes telling me about Binney's exams. Oh dear, how it weighs on me. I wouldn't write like this, darling, but it is all over with you long ago, & you cannot be upset by it.

Lots of interruption, office work is piling in on me. Alexander has come back, and all the clerks are here to torment me.

I must not forget to say, the parcel has come that contains collars, specs and mat, very many thanks. Thank Jeannie specially for the mat. Tis very pretty. Everything was non injured, darling, but the cardboard box was in rags, held together by the canvas cover. The watches would not have survived. I hope they will be in time, darling. I am sending the 2nd of Exs for £30 which I hope will have reached you all right. I must stop, Pet, there is such a lot of work.

All my love, your own Fred.

Fred's mis-quote comes from An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog by Oliver Goldsmith "Around from all the neighbouring streets, The wondering neighbours ran," The people who "were a little savage" are the authorities.

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Mandalay, 24 June 87

Emmie darling

Tis Friday morning. I am at home alone, & the mail letters are expected soon. Steamer got in last night, & as there is nothing urgent which requires me to look at, and as Alexander is out doing what was formerly my work, I made my mind up to take it easy till letters come in. There'll be plenty of office work to do then.

I have almost a nervous feeling about your letter, darling, wanting to get it, but afraid t'will give me bad news. It's too soon, however, to know the result by this mail, but I can't help the feeling that things have not gone well, & tis quite oppressive to think that it's all decided and settled. You have gone through it all, & I utterly unable to form the least notion of what has happened. It will, I suppose, be like this with every mail, til I know. I suppose you have guessed what is on my mind, Binney's exam. Twas an awful blow, that letter of Gurney's, saying the chances were against him. I used to be very hopeful before that. I wouldn't write like this, darling, if you could get it before the event. It can't do harm to write it now, and it is a relief to me here in my loneliness. I feel depressed this morning, a little feverish I suppose, but I wakened up with a feeling, like a presentiment, that some bad luck was coming on me. Tis very absurd that idea of presentiment, of something wrong coming, but tis what every one, I suppose, fancies when in low spirits.

I feel more cheerful about my work than usual. Lately I have effected, by steady persevering, what many said was not possible. All that earthwork of the Division is finished, 6 months after commencing. The timber bridge over the river, where the Iron Bridge (biggest on the line) is to be built, is approaching completion, and work can proceed at any height of flood, all the bottom parts in the water being ready. We can work away, & have rails laid over, probably in a month from now. Every one prophesied that it could not be done, & I said it could be tried, & I would try. The weather, at one time, looked awfully against us, very heavy rain & small floods, that would stop our work, and make it look like failure, but lately, it has been fine for a long time, and we have got things, so that floods won't stop us. I have succeeded, at last, in getting a telegraph office & line opened for my own use, between this and the steamer landing place, & as there are great landing operations of heavy material going on, I can get work done much more satisfactorily.

Buyers is expected here Monday. I don't feel very much exhilarated over it personally, but I want to show him the work, and make him settle some questions, that will enable me to get on. None of the staff, as far as I can find out, seem to like him. He does not care whether any of us are comfortable or satisfied, & has no intention of backing us up, taking our part or getting concessions for us from Govt. I believe, if Parker had been here instead of Matthews and Buyers, we should have got concessions and extra allowances, that would have been some recompense for our hardships, and the heavy expense we are put to in living. I feel perfectly infuriated at the idea, that we get very much less than we drew in Bengal, that they apparently decline to mend matters, while at the same time, an RE is sent here, with a special appointment, and 500 a month extra, and even a C.E. (who was specially arranged for, with the Madras Govt.) got 300/. With us, we are ordered to come, have no option & get nothing. Enough of that however, darling, it is a most frightful subject of conversation among ourselves, but there is no reason you should be troubled with it.

I am in doubt about my weekly arrangements. Monday is my usual day for going out to the Bridge. but I can't do it this time, because of Buyers coming, & I cannot well go Sunday, as he may come Sunday evening, & at the same time, I am particularly anxious to go out and see how things are, before he does come. I'll just see how many letters there are, and if I can polish them off early tomorrow, and go out in the afternoon of tomorrow, and back again Sunday afternoon. Tis quite possible, there may not be many officials, and this much written, before your letter has come, will show that I have not altogether neglected you, darling.

I must tell you how I am revelling in spectacles. I have a separate pair for different times of day. One pair is in my bedroom, and one in my writing table, besides the spare ones stowed away there also. A panic almost seizes me, when I fancy a danger of running out of spectacles.

Mail letters just come in, but horror! no letter from you, darling. There are no English papers, either, no letter for Alexander, so it is possible, the English mail did not reach. They would not, as before, delay the steamer for it, as another mail comes up

Monday, so I won't worry. I have just received a *chit* from Post Office, to say the English Mail had not arrived. The steamer was caught in a cyclone near Aden, and did not reach Bombay in proper time. Whether we shall have to wait for another week, or whether they will send a supplementary steamer, from Calcutta to Rangoon, is the question. At all events, the delay is not indicative of any misfortune to you, Pet, so tis a great relief.

There has been very little in the way of official correspondence, & nothing to keep me here tomorrow but for the accounts, & they, I believe, are going to thwart me, and I shall not be able to get away as I intended. Alexander has come in, & breakfast time (12 noon) approaches, so I must stop now. If I cannot write much more, you will forgive in consideration of my not having had my letter, will you, Pet!

I had to stop here, & now tis getting on to four o'clock. I have arranged to go out tomorrow afternoon, to my Bridge, & come in next day.

I must stop now, darling, as something has turned up, to make it necessary for me to go down to the Shore this afternoon, & I don't believe I shall have a moment to spare tomorrow.

I will send all my love to you and ours, Ever your own, Fred.

Saturday morning - after finishing the above, yesterday, the parcel containing watches, shirts, unmentionables (as Jeannie calls them, cotton underclothing). I was very glad to get the said articles, as the others has become very dilapidated, I was ashamed to be seen in them. Tell Jeannie, the Mad Dog is splendid, and so is "four & twenty black birds". Paper weights in my present circumstance are, beyond measure, invaluable. I never saw such a gusty place. There is an open window within two feet of my right arm, & the wind seems to delight in annoying me. A paper cannot be left an instant, without being blown away. The shirts, too, how proud I shall be to wear a shirt without holes in it. I was glad to get the watches also, as the Govt. one had just begun to play tricks, and I was in despair.

Been interrupted here for a long time, & fear I cannot accomplish much more. We are in difficulties in our journeying. The floods have risen, and at one place, the water is so high over a bridge, that carts cannot go. I have to send on, and get another cart, & keep in readiness. I go out half my journey on trolley, so it is not a very arduous undertaking. Will stop in earnest now, darling. My wits are wandering to business matters, and are beyond control for any useful at this. All my love, Fred.

*RE is Royal Engineer (army) and C.E. is Civil Engineer (not army). Fred is C.E.*

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Mandalay, 2 July 87

Emmie darling

I have continuing, this time, to arrange to write you in a creditable manner, but the success is not very marked. Last evening, I took an excursion to the Shore, to avoid having to go this morning, & I stopped in the house, so as to have a quiet undisturbed time, but, alas, I found a pile of official letters, & have spent 2 hours over them, which was intended to have been yours, & lastly, & by no means the least importantly, I am

feeling very bad, that sinking sort of feeling that makes one miserable and unfit for anything. I have been feverish for the last two days, after quite a long spell of being well, and although I seem to have shaken it off, I have the feeling I speak of, remains of the fever.

Buyers has been up here for several days now, has been all over my work, and bored me in office considerably. He is better than he was, fiddles less with the work, & appears to have grasped the fact that I know something about it, & my opinion ought not to be utterly pooh poohed, as I thought he did at first.

I have got on very well (tho it's me says it as shouldn't) with my work, and more has been done than was thought possible. All my earthwork, which was the heaviest on the line, is finished. A timber bridge, across the biggest river there is, is so far advanced, that no flood can stop us, & can be finished, & rails laid across the river, to forward communication with the Division beyond. More than that, I have the brickwork of a major Bridge finished, that would have been a perfect stoppage to our works. It crosses a great sheet of water, which is so deep, & with so soft a bottom, that nothing temporary could have been made. We had all sorts of trouble. The flood filled the pits with mud, and stopped the work many times, but I still kept hammering at them, and now hurrah!! tis finished. Buyers was gracious enough to say "you have made good progress". I did not think he would acknowledge it. He seemed so ready to find fault with every detail.

We have had trouble lately in getting about, because of the water. Carts cannot go over that place (though there is a raised road and bridge) where my Bridge is being built, & we have to send & engage one on other side. The fatigue of the journey is not much however, more than half being on trolley now.

I have had many interruptions, and now there comes a man to sit opposite me and talk at intervals while waiting for Buyers. Tis not very inspiring.

Your last letter, darling, was the 2nd June, & I got the previous one, 23rd to 26th May, which I told you of as having been delayed. They put on an extra steamer from Calcutta, and consequently the midweek steamer brought the mails up, & we were only kept 3 days out of our letters.

I can hardly manage to write about Binney's business. I am thinking about it a good deal, & the fact, that it's all over, and settled by this time & I cannot know it, makes me feel very uncomfortable, especially when I am seedy. I have waking dreams about it. Tis I suppose just what you were going through, darling, at the time your letter was written, but with this difference, I can do nothing but wait, while you are in the middle of the fight, and do something to help it on. I can quite understand the poor Boy's state of mind before the work is coming on, and in the intervals of the next, but I believe, when he is actually at work, his pluck would get up. Above all things, darling, I am convinced, that you will do what is the very best possible, to help him over the business. Your judgment and tact in dealing, helping, pushing, coaxing & soothing him at proper times, & to proper extent, will give him a better chance of success than anything else could do. God bless you for being such a good wife and mother! I did not intend to mention the subject but there!! I feel better for it.

I was stopped here utterly, and have been as busy as I could be ever since, & tis now nearly 4 o'clock, with work still remains to be done. I can only ask your to forgive. I recd the song "Little Bed" rather more infantish in the words than I thought but the music is very pretty. Chambers also came, very many thanks darling.

My wits are all wandering. Buyers went away, but has been amusing himself ever since, writing *chits*. I don't think I can do anything more to this under the surroundings.

A long gap, darling, & now tis near 5 o'clock, & letters going off.

All my love, ever your own Fred

I have written to the Bank to send £30/-

*I think the song is "Put me in my little bed" (words by Dexter Smith, music by C.A. White).
The first line is "Oh birdie, I am tired now, I do not care to hear you sing"*

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Mandalay, 23 July 87

Emmie darling

I have had a Europe morning, so as to have some time to devote to you, and not to begin writing too soon. An accident intervened, to wit, I had not a sheet of thin paper to write on. I have managed, however, at last to get this from a place in the town, so, having found it, there is no danger of correspondence being stopped hereafter.

I recd. yours of the 19 to 23 June yesterday afternoon, the mail having come in a day later than usual, & it has left me but a very short time to write this, when all the office letters have to be attended to also. I perceive now, I had been disquieting myself unnecessarily, (that perhaps is not a good word) about Binney, owing to not having got your telegram, and thereby feeling sure that he had failed. I see now that you cannot have heard, even now, and after reading yours & Binneys letters, yesterday afternoon, I felt in quite good spirits. I cannot tell exactly why I should be, however, except that it was the rebound from the feeling of certainty of failure. I have got into a different frame now. I feel, that there is very slender hope of his passing, & I shall not be so cast down, when I know the certainty of failure, but there is just the feeling, that it is not certain yet. How I wish I could say something, about what is to be done, in case he succeeds. Don't mind this rather childish sort of writing. I have no one else to mention the subject to. I feel that I could not speak of it to anyone around me, & I have not opened my lips about, since first I heard that failure was likely. There is, of course, nothing really to be said, but my mind is so full of it, that I cannot think of anything else. I cannot discuss the alternatives either, Pet. Tis so impossible for me, to find out anything here, that I might be writing what influences matters for the worse, without really being able to form any opinions.

The one thing certain is, darling, that I cannot go on paying out, as I have done. The cost of my living here, & remittances to you, have lately been more than my salary. I keep up fund subscriptions, but you know, darling, I have but a short time to save in now, for the future and - I was just going to write about Binney then. How I wish I could talk about it. Oh dear!!

Tell Binney I cannot find time for a separate letter to him. I am very much pleased with his letter. It is exceedingly clear & well expressed & there is very distinct evidence of education in his style of writing, as compared with what was a very short time ago. He must not think hardly of my not writing. I have so much work and worry, through the day's work, that I am absolutely unable to get through, it without a rest, & sleep if possible, in the middle of the day, & when it comes to mail days, with much correspondence, tis absolutely impossible to find spare time. Tell him, there is not much doubt about his being in my thoughts, but he must take such correspondence benefit as he can from you, Pet.

You seem to have had great doings over Jubilee business, & it is right that it should be, but I am glad to say, we were not called upon to have another here. When I say "you" I mean the Gen. Public of England London. It would have disappointed you much, darling, if you cared for such things, not being able to go and see such grand doings, but I know you don't care much, & we are fortunate in our young people not being unhappy at seeing, which means spending more. It is a great point gained, in having them realize, that there is not money to spend. If we had extravagancies & unhappiness, because things could not be bought, it would be a very bad case for our family.

I see, you had just got my letter, speaking of the possibility of my getting away from Mandalay. You will very soon have found out, that I did not go, & very glad I am that I did not. Tis certain, that the work, I have to do here, is the most difficult and most interesting there is on the line, and if there is any credit to be got out of the business, this Division ought to give it.

Up to this time, I have got everything done that was in my power, in carrying out the programme for the work. In all instances has my share of the work been done, and I have had to wait for material or stone, or for something to be done by someone else, & I am taking care that it is understood, too. I have just been half worried to death, over some girders. There was a great struggle to get the brickwork of one Bridge done, through what is now a lake, before the waters came up, the said Bridge being the key to the work's completion. Well!! I succeeded, & got it finished, & then began to put on the girders, & found to my horror, that parts of 13 spans had been sent up, without any arrangement whatever, and there was not a single girder complete, and I had to wait with my work stopped, and it was ultimately discovered, that the parts missing had not been sent up at all, & that no arrangement whatever had been carried out in the matter. It will be a great score off Buyers, who was disposed to think that the Rangoon people and storekeeper was not in the wrong. It is all very well, however, to prove that the delay is not my fault, but it would be much better if there was no delay to have to explain. If everything had gone on as well as my own work, I should have had the work of my division complete, and communication through, in seven months of the time of commencing, & that, I consider, not bad, for the heaviest Division on this line. The big Bridge of course would not have been done, not having come out from home, but a temporary bridge of timber is built across the river.

My office has come upon me, & I shall very soon have to stop altogether. The interruption, in writing and receiving telegrams, has been something considerable. Head Clerk just emerging from the hole in the floor, which is the entrance from my office.

I don't feel sure that I have got the right state of the case in my head, but my idea of it is Mrs. below is to give up her house, or to give up boarders, or you may not go back to her. Those are the words of your letter, I find, just having looked it up. I am sending this care of Miss Binney & hope there'll not be much delay. Next week, I suppose, is the remittance week, & the money would be safer going that way. You speak of having a very seedy time, between your last letter and the one before. I was so sorry, darling, to know of it, but, oh dear, how helpless for any good to you I feel here. I hope the trip somewhere will come off, Pet. It will surely do you good, and all the flock, some seaside place where the Boys and Girls can enjoy themselves on the beach & bathe. It would not do to say play so I scratched that out.

I have a lot of telegrams to send, and any quantity of other work so I'll just wind this up, for fear of accidents, and leave cover unclosed, in case I find it possible to write more.

Poor Col. Burgess has written me from the hospital. He had been ill some time, & I thought he was away. He said he was getting better but very dull, & wanted me to go and see him. I must try & go tomorrow morning.

Love, darling, to all specially yourself, my own dear good wife. Ever your own, Fred.

*In recent letters, Fred was so pleased to get a telegraph office, and now he is overwhelmed with telegrams!*

~~~~~

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Love, darling, to all specially yourself, my own dear good wife. Ever your own, Fred.

In recent letters, Fred was so pleased to get a telegraph office, and now he is overwhelmed with telegrams!

The Jubilee is Victoria's Golden Jubilee, marking the fiftieth anniversary of her accession.

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*This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date early August 1887  
sheet/s missing*

... provided an officer can pass into the Indian Staff Corps, and (I believe) they get their commission & pay at once, whereas, for Sandhurst, they have to be at College, and pay out for a year, then, again a private fee! Would have to pay £125. I fear, very much, there is nothing to be hoped for as an Indian Cadet. I think, it must mean the Pucca Civil Service, not a P W D man. Leggatt ought to tell you about that. Perhaps, we being

pensionable however, and the rates of pay being regulated by pension, it may be possible to do something, (that just struck me) but the fact remains, that even if he did get into Sandhurst, & get his Commission, there would still be the inability to live on his pay. Some other development may, however, arise before this reaching you dearest, but you must not forget, that I cannot go on paying for education. If I am not able to save anything, we shall be beggars when I have to retire 5 years hence, & not able to get out of the country. On thinking the matter over, I came to the conclusion, that my peace of mind is due in a great measure, to my simply facing the Question of B's failure. I could not bring myself regularly to sit down, & make my mind up as to the something else to do. The fact of failure simply seem to break my back (I always feel for that poor Camel) when fully forced on me, & on top of all other bad luck, which has continually heaped on me of late. I can't see the "turning of the lane", and I feel so hard to be without anyone to help me bear it. I won't go on in that strain, darling, but, do you know, even that, on this particular morning, does not seem to depress. Is it not strange?

I was exceedingly pleased to hear of Fred's good performance. We may well be proud of his abilities, and his good disposition to use them. His beating Bodmin Mi. must have been a great triumph for him. Fred is awfully like you, in that way he has of going at a thing, and polishing it off, & now that his health seems more robust, we may well have great hopes of what he may do, if I can afford to continue, to him, his opportunities. If he could but get another scholarship, it would be a blessing for him. Tell him, with my love, how much I am pleased at what he has done.

You distress me so much, darling, at your continual seedinesses. I suppose, tis because you are a woman, and your inclination, to have fever, makes other matters worse. If I could only be near, to see and know whether these ailments were trifling, or likely to be serious or not, I should be happier about it, but to read in your letters that almost every week, between me writing and the next you ...

*sheet/s missing*

*P W D (Public Works Department) responsible (among other things) for building railways in India and Burma. Fred works for them.*

~~~~~

Mandalay, 13 Aug

Emmie darling

It has been a pretty severe blow, notwithstanding my having, as I thought, so fully made up my mind for it. The telegram not coming was of course perfect evidence, but you know how one will hope. I found myself wondering, one day, how many telegrams miscarried in coming from England, & if yours was one of them. All this was very foolish, but it helped, I think, to prevent my depression getting worse. Yesterday, when your letter came, Pet, I was completely knocked up with one of my feverish attacks, and after I got in from the line, I had to go to bed & sleep. After some hours of that, I got up, & found your letter, & you may imagine my cheerfulness, & good spirits did not return at once. I have often fancied, as you may remember when we have talked it over,

that Binney has had all sorts of fortunate things happening to him, from the very first. You remember, how we used to think ourselves so fortunate, in having discovered Miss Keeling. Miss Binney once told me, when I spoke of it as a lucky accident, she says "Oh, don't call it an accident". Be it what it may, lucky accidents, or otherwise, seem to be over for us. I sometimes thought, on going home from Madras, although resulting from one of the most unfortunate things that ever happened to me, was going to result in good to us, by the good in getting Binney into the In.Ci. Now, ah me! so much disappointment to the poor boy, to you & me, and to all of us, and the money, which is no small consideration absolutely wasted, all that cramming, which he had not been able to retain till his exam, will be of little use in after life, as education.

Now, dear, to tell you why this is more serious to me, than might at first appear. We have just heard, that Govt. have refused to grant us any allowance whatever for our work here. I, with expense of living doubled, am in receipt of less pay, than I had on the survey from Hazaribugh. The consequence is, that in sending home the money for School bills three times in the year, I have not been able to make up, in the interval, enough to meet the next remittance, & now when I was expecting (& all thought on good grounds) an extra allowance from Govt and arrears, I have to pay, into the Bank, Rs1000 Gov. note for what I have overdrawn. It was the last of my savings, & I thought it would come in useful, in case I had to move, or go on sick leave from here. Tis a very melancholy way of writing, darling, but nothing else can be expected from me, and tis better to take the real facts as they exist.

If B. has succeeded, I could have managed to raise enough to complete the university course, with the £150 a year, & the prospect of his being provided for, for life, but now, with no help, & nothing but the prospect of having to help him to live for years, if I were to succeed in borrowing, I see no way of returning it, & therefore the hope, of being able to borrow, is of the faintest.

You will have got my letter, two mails ago, speaking of what I thought of the Marines, as against Sandhurst, & you must act on it, darling. Tis hard, darling, to keep the Boy [*Fred junior*] from the better service, if he has the desire for it, but there is no blinking the fact, that he will have to live on his pay from the commencement. Sandhurst will require paying out for a twelve month highly, and the heavy expenses for outfit afterwards, while in the Marine Light Infantry, he would get his Commission & pay at once. If you are talking the matter over with anyone, you must let them know this part of the case in the best manner possible, but the only way, payments for Binney could be continued, would be, first to take Fred from school, second to reduce our other expenses somehow.

I will keep to the usual £30 remittance monthly, darling, and very soon will let you know how much more I can manage. I shall write today to the Bank, and see if they will make some arrange to let me overdraw. I shall be able to sell my pony next month (and save that much, nearly 30/- a month) as the trolley will by that time be running through. I was in hopes of having this business cleared up, by the back pay, which all

thought we should get, but now that hope has gone, you must know how we stand, darling.

I have been interrupted here, by work, and all sorts of complications, visitors & puzzles of sorts. I hope to see my way to writing some more, & will send a remittance of some amount as can be spared by next mail. The Bank has promised to square my account, realize my Govt. note, & let me know how I stand.

Love to all, & to yourself especially, darling, in case I cannot write more. My fever is better, darling, in spite of this terrible worry, so don't be uneasy. I think it is passing away as so many have done before this.

Your own Fred

Not time for another word, darling. I am sorry. Let me hear, in answering this, exactly what the fees are, which you have to pay. I will see what I can send, next mail.

~~~~~

Mandalay, 20 Aug 87

Emmie darling

Everything is against me this time. Tis 11.30 of Saturday, last day of writing. I have not had a moment before, on which I could write, & there is that "Old Man of the Sea" Buyers, here in the house, besides my having a full day's work in my ordinary occupation. Buyers came up, night before last, without a word being sent to me, & I only knew of it, by accident, an hour before he came. Since then, he has been bothering about, in the most trying manner. We have now just come back, from up the line, where I took B to see a bridge, which has just been got across.

But the embarrassment, of all others, is what to say about Binney, & all you have written about him, in yours of the 22nd. There is a lot, on which tis useless to say anything, as all may be changed before this reaches you, and there is a lot on which, I can say nothing, because I know nothing of the circumstances, & cannot find out. There is one thing, however, which is beyond all uncertainty. There is a debt of gratitude, by Binney, towards Mr Milford, which he can scarcely hope ever to repay. As far as B is concerned, I suppose, no greater piece of good fortune could have happened to him, not could there be anything more opportune.

I was interrupted here for breakfast, and have not had a moment since, work and bother with Buyers. He has gone at last, after waiting and talking rubbish, two hours longer than he said he would, or than there was need.

Now what am I to say. I have not had time to think it over. There is one thing certain. I would not prevent Binney following his inclination, for the pursuit of his life, if it is possible. He certainly does not seem to fancy the Army. My greatest difficulty, always, has been, in being able to see how any opening could be found for him, and who could push him forward or take an interest in him. But it would seem to have been solved now, if there is anything like a certainty, of getting the mastership, after the college time is over. But oh dear! How can I write, darling. I know, and can know, nothing about the detail. I would much prefer his not coming to India, now that the Civil Service chance is

gone. There is none other worth having, so if the present idea is attainable, it would seem, on those grounds, suitable. There is little doubt, after Mr Milford showing himself such a friend to him, he will look after him as far as possible in such cases to do so. I should [not] let any sense of pride interfere with the acceptance of such an offer, if other things can be made compatible. Indeed, this offer is such a handsome one, beyond all experience, that it would show ingratitude to refuse it, without sufficient reason, & it would not be fair to Binney, to do anything that might be the marring of a career for him, such as a refusal would be. I cannot understand why the man would do such a Kindness, but it must be through something, of which Binney has reason to be proud.

I have been interrupted, and distracted almost, by some stupid blunders in the office work, which has nearly driven me wild, & made me more unfit to write than ever.

Tell me, darling, is not Mr Milford, the Master who spoke so kindly to Fred, and asked "if he had any more young brothers to bring to school", that time when we went down with the boys, when they went first to Haileybury, after the term began. You remember, don't you, darling. I like to feel that I have seen the man, who would do such a thing for our boy. I must think over this whole business, darling, and try to make something more of it, and write better, when there is more time.

I am sending £40, darling, in the hope that it will help you with the most urgent school bills, etc. I have not squared my bank a/c yet, and fear there will not be a large balance there, but cannot tell. After the first of the month, I shall have more, Pet. I am sending the 2nd of Exchange of the £30, which ought to have gone to you, two mails ago. Not a word more, darling. I am feeling all right, notwithstanding much work & worry.

My love to all, darling, ever your own, Fred

*"Old Man of the Sea": someone riding on someone else's back and not letting go.*

*"Mr Milford", teacher at Haileybury, has obviously offered something, but it is difficult to figure out what! A later letter to Binney talks of a loan, which would presumably help him through university. There is also the suggestion of the "mastership", presumably becoming a teacher (at Haileybury?) This would be a suitable career for Binney.*

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Mandalay, 27 Aug

Emmie darling

I have made Europe morning of it, and stopped home to write this. I fear, it won't be much of a production, however, as I have one of my feverish attacks on, with a headache, not very bad but not conducive to high literary effort. Fortunately I have not much work to do, that would worry me & make irritable.

If I don't feel too bad, I am going out this afternoon to the Bridge, to make a struggle to get the rails through the Division and over the Bridge. T'will be rather an event, and the Chief Commissioner is believed to want to go out, & see the R'way. I scarcely believe in his wanting to go. He does not take the least interest in the R'way, will do nothing to help us, and his only hope is that we won't bother. I am going to send & ask, if he wants to go, by way of having it settled. We hope to get a trolley through

Wednesday, and then this part of the line will be practically finished. Train will be able to run over on to the next Division, at the end of the week, & they have no reason to grumble at what has been done. Just nine months since I came here, and everything finished, except the big Bridge, which has only just come out from home, and the station plans which have not been drawn yet. That is, every thing, that was depending on me alone, is finished. I feel that I shall have an easier time after this. There is nothing that has to be pushed, and my estimates are in, and a/cs in order, so Buyers has nothing to bother me about. I shall spend a good deal of time out at the Bridge, where it is much pleasanter than in Mandalay, & where I am free from office worry.

Your letter, Pet, of July 27 has come. Things seem to be happening with you, but don't complete themselves. The move, to the new house, seems to have been accomplished, but, as usual, I see you have been working yourself to death, almost. I imagine, from your description, darling, that you are in much more comfortable quarters, with the garden and other advantages, but I don't like your bedroom being skyed. Sacrificing yourself seems to be the great pleasure of your life. Our children are good but I don't think they are deserving to have their comforts and pleasures override yours. It is a wonder they have not been utterly spoiled long ago by that sort of thing - Pelican business.

You are probably right, about the letter you were expecting having gone to Miss Binney. I sent twice to her, and the money went so also once, & I hope there has been no worse mishap than the days delay.

I have been interrupted here, to make a bargain with a brickmaker, and it has been a long jaw with little result.

About the subject, it seems that I can say nothing, as you had nothing to tell me, and no progress had been made. I had thought of writing to Mr Milford, but it would be well for me to know more about the business, before doing that. Time should not be lost about doing it, and I feel sure you have written, but I want to know about the details, and what is going to be done, lest I should make a mess of it in some way. I should like very much to know if he is the man we saw - which of the masters was he? I mean - what did he teach? And how were the boys thrown so much in his way. This is the most wonderful piece of kind generosity I ever experienced, & such as one seldom hears of ever, towards people you know nothing of, & only hear of. I can't help feeling proud of Binney's having the disposition and faculty, that would produce such a feeling towards him. About what is likely to be the result, I don't know what to say. If I could only be with you, and discuss it. Is this anything like a certainty of his getting an engagement such as you are thinking of? What is it likely to lead to? Those are the things that are, first of all, to be settled. We have no interest whatever, as you know, Pet, in any direction. Of course, Mr Milford would use his influence & interest on B's behalf, after his other great kindness, and the question is - Is that enough to secure Binney a position & pay of independence? You see, darling, how impossible it is, for me to help in settling any thing so far away. I sometimes have a feeling that it is possibly for the best, that he is not to have an Indian career, which it seemed to me, was the only one open for him, in the absence of friends at home who

could help him. Now it seems a friend has been found by himself, for which we cannot be thankful enough.

I have lately come to think I cannot be sanguine about anything, after all my late bad luck, but this piece of good fortune, coming so unexpectedly, leads one back a little from despair. I ought not to be writing now, darling, & giving you the benefit of my low spirits. Tis only the fever which will go soon, so don't worry, darling.

I think, I will stick to my intention, and go out this afternoon. The change of air will, I daresay, drive the fever away. It generally does. Tis too bad, it should come on just today, your letter day, when you have had so many bad ones lately. There is nothing much to write about.

The Chief Com'r with Mrs and Miss came back yesterday, & some powder was burnt, but that seems to be the only thing we are likely to hear from him. I have not been asked there yet. He seems not to take the slightest interest in the railway, as far as one can see. No inquiry is ever made, as to how we are getting on, and there seems no desire to help us to get on. There was a talk of his going out the line, but I hear nothing of it now.

Col Burgess had gone on sick leave to Australia, 3 months, and there is now not a soul in the place to be friendly with. I gave up the Gymkhana & reading room for economy sake, but think I must go back to it again, & perhaps I shall go and call on the ladies. They all look so savage at me (or their husbands do, rather) & I really do feel ashamed when I meet them, & perhaps now that every one that I can make a chum of is gone, I may get some good from knowing the ladies.

I have had so many interruptions, and am feeling so bad, that there is not much more writing to be got out of me, and I may as well stop. Such a pile of papers was brought to me just now, that I thought I should not get back to this at all.

Love to all, darling & especially to yourself, Ever your own, Fred

Emmie and the family have moved from their previous lodgings (as mentioned in a previous letter). So Fred directed his letters to Miss Binney, Emmie's cousin, who also lived in London. "Bedroom being skyed" - an attic bedroom, which would be inferior. "Pelican business" - the pelican was supposed to feed its young with blood from its own breast.

"We have no interest" - Fred and Emmie are Canadians, and know no-one in Britain who can help their children in their careers.

"Some powder was burnt" - I assume this is a gun salute.

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Mandalay, 3 Sep 1887

Emmie darling

The Dr has told me to be quiet today, and get out of bed as little as possible. I have been in his hands, three days, and yesterday he forgot all about me. If he had only come yesterday, & done what was necessary, I should, I think, have been well now. He says, there is threatening of dysentery, & I will be docile as he may require, if I can only avoid this.



I was impatient at being laid up just now, as today they run the first train over the Division and over the big river. We are a little later than we might have been, but it is not bad, nine months after my first arrival. I have the Division practically finished. I am a little disappointed at the Chief Commissioner. When he first came, he seemed all agog in his interest for the Railway, but that, I find, was because he was stirred up by an enthusiastic old R.E. Two days after his arrival, he went out the line, but since then I have given hint after hint that I could take him up, but without result. He is a Curmudgeon.

I am writing sitting up in bed, & it does not seem fitting, & the ink won't flow, but you will make allowances I know, Pet. [~~crossed out~~ I am sending 2nd of Exchange for £40.] My wits are wandering. I sent that by last mail. I am writing to the Bank to send the £30 remittance when the cheque for my salary goes & I hope you will get it all right.

Your last was dated 4th & 5th Aug, darling, with letter from Jeannie enclosed. You seem to be well off in your new dwelling. I don't like your being skyed. You know it never suited you going up and down stairs. The garden and tennis court seem great acquisitions to the young people.

Just after writing the above, the Dr came in & I have had to undergo some pretty effectual remedies, which have done me good, I think, but have taken it out of me a good deal. The Dr. says, I must lay up for a few days, & be perfectly quiet, so if that is all, there may not be anything serious the matter. You will forgive, darling. This is the very worst letter you have ever had, I think, but I have not once before written in bed.

Love to all, darling, especially yourself. Ever your own, Fred.

*Curmudgeon - a bad-tempered or surly person*

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Mandalay, 24 Sep 1887

Emmie darling

I am beginning this morning, more for the sake of beginning, than anything else, as I have not thought of anything to write, and have tomorrow before me to write in earnest, but it will help some, to get a start made, before office people come to bother me. I am all right again, and can eat anything pretty near again, but still am a little careful, & feel not quite so vigorous as before. I am awfully troubled at not being able to sleep, lie awake till three and four in the morning sometimes, and that makes me feel feeble.

Nothing more has occurred since my last. Work is going on all right, and I have a much easier time. All, that was required in a hurry, has been done, & as far as my division is concerned, they might open the line tomorrow. What I want now is something to look forward to, some chance of getting you out to me. Our being together is what I want more than anything else I know of, & if I could see my way to it, I should be happier. I have so much work to do, that the time seems to slip by quickly, that is, after it has gone, there seems to have been very little of it. To think that we are now nearly at the end of Sept.

Awful bad luck over this, darling. I stopped on Saturday from being too busy, & thinking there'd be plenty of time Sunday, but sad to say I was laid up, & in bed all day,

threatening of my old complaint, had to be very quiet, and was under treatment that made me feel bad, & quite unfit to write. Now I am feeling better, there is less danger of going back to the old state but have been driven off my head with office work, and now I have much work to do in office, & have to start out to Myobingye, as the Bridge there is in danger of tumbling over. I think it will be all right but I need be on the spot, in case anything does happen. I don't feel very spry, but dare say may be all the better for the trip, if I only had something to eat inside. I shall try soup and pudding before I leave. Under the circumstances, darling, I hope you will pardon the bad attempt at a letter.

I have just been reading two first rate books for boys. If you can get them from your library, Binney & Fred would like them I know - "The Treasure Island" and "Kidnapped" by R.L.Stevenson.

There were several things I was going to tell about, if there had been time, but one I must tell. I lent Owen my steamer, and he was to try & get by a small river, up to the other end of his Division by water, as there were no roads, & floods all over the Country. Well! this said river went right through a country, from which all the people had fled, and was in the hands of dacoits. Owen did not like order either his assistants, or his subordinates, to go in steamer, when there was such danger, so he went himself. From the nature of things, he said dacoits could not have done anything if they had tried, as the baulks were all covered with very high grass, and they could not approach within shot without being discovered. He had a place made all round him, with bags of sawdust to prevent the dacoits hitting him, & there he sat with breech loading rifle, ready for action. He did not bag anything however, & was not attacked.

The newspapers are beginning to write about the Railway Engineers not getting any honours with regard to the pacification of Burmah, but I don't know if anything will be done for us. If they gave us some more pay, it would be to the purpose, but I don't care for much else. I will send my love to all, darling, in case I am not able to write, the time for starting has passed already.

Your own Fred

This is Tuesday 27th. Just at last moment, I thought of putting this between paper of blotting pad, and taking it along, so as to add some more here in Myobingye, & send in by trolley to catch the post. I came out [*ink changes*] (stylographic pen ran out) yesterday afternoon, and altho I felt very shaky & scarcely able to walk, I think I am better for the change. The Bridge is not in serious danger and I think, it will be all right again in a day or two, but it looked rather queer to see the rails all go crooked at the top of it. The water rose 9 feet, & trees and floating rubbish got caught in the wooden piles, the result being that, at such places where the stuff lodged, the Bridge was simply pushed over a certain number of inches down stream. Men were put to clear the stuff away, & then the Bridge came back to its proper position. I am glad I came up, so as to be on the spot, altho now I think, there is no danger.

Your last, darling, was dated Aug 22nd to 26th, with copy of Mr Gurneys about Binney. Certainly the masters seem to take a fancy to him, and he probably will have the faculty of making friends, & it will be a help to him through life. I also got the result of

the I.C.S. Exam. No one marked Binney's place but I remembered, long ago you told me his exam no. was 3, so I fixed on that to see how he did. I was glad to see the book, darling, and many things occurred to me as I went through the ...
Subsequent sheet/s may be missing.

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Mandalay, 2 Oct 87

My dear Binney

I was very glad to get your letter of Aug 30, and to know that you are pleased and hopeful at the prospect before you. If the change in the direction for your career, which will keep you in a good climate, proves successful and suits your inclination and capability, there will be less reason for disappointment. The best made arrangement, that we think to make for ourselves, are often numbered for our good, although at times it may be difficult to see it. I was exceedingly pleased to know, that you have the faculty of making friends for yourself, among those who are placed over you, and if you retain that through life, it will help you at every step in your career.

One seldom hears of such true unselfish kindness, so opportunely offered, as that loan of Mr Milford's. You should be proud of having made such a friend of such a man, & you are specially fortunate in having a friend, who is able and has the will to show his friendship in such a way. You will, I have no doubt, do your utmost to deserve his kindness, and to repay it by every means in your power. What he has done will be of benefit to you, for all your days, if you take pains to profit by the education, which his kindness will enable you to complete so fully.

You must do all that is possible, my dear Binney, to obtain a scholarship or Exhibition, to help with the expense of your completing the University course. A great deal depends on your being able, early, to help yourself.

I was very glad to hear all that you had to tell me, about Mr Milford. I think I saw him for a moment once, when I went down with you and Fred, when you returned to Haileybury, after your holidays. Was it not he who shook hands with Fred, and asked if he was bringing any more "little brothers"? & with whom you and Fred talked a little while. I should like to think I had seen him, tho it was so little.

I read the paper about Oxford, which you sent by a previous mail, and, with what you now write, can understand what is required of you in the way of Examinations etc. The names, "Little go" among those, reminds me of my own college days, although the arrangements for study seem to be, in a great measure, on quite new lines from anything I knew before. You should have no difficulty, beyond a little extra diligence for a short time, in getting your Greek back again. Horace Latin, I liked, from the quantities that you see so much of. Xenophon always seemed to me to be easy, & reminded me of Latin of Caesar, and like Livy. It is tedious going back to the beginning of work like that, & cramming at Grammar, but you now will work at it with a greater grasp, & knowing the importance of managing the details, instead of as your early school days, learning details without knowing what the application or good of them could be.

I dare say your idea, of going to the library in S.K.Museum, will be a good one, & the exercise, going and returning, will do you good, if you can apply yourself diligently, in a public place. I always found it difficult to apply my attention to reading anything, surrounded by strangers, but, if I remember aright, you always could bury yourself in a book, in spite of surroundings. Whatever you do, my dear boy, make the very most of your opportunities, and do your best to get over difficulties, which there may be no way of overcoming, other than by extra application.

You see to have some fairly pleasant times, with your visits and excursions with the rest of the family, and I am glad to see you all enjoy being together so much. Make the most of these opportunities. The day will come perhaps, when there will be little enjoyment of that kind, when you may have to labour, & struggle among strangers, with no one belonging to you to cheer, & smooth away the roughnesses of life. Ask Mother for ordinary news of me, & with my love and earnest wishes & prayers for your success  
believe me your affectionate Father

*Binney is applying for Oxford. He intends to study at South Kensington Museum library.  
Fred's education was in Canada, and he has no idea how an Oxford education works.*

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Mandalay, Saturday 8 Oct 87

Emmie darling

I am home from the work, an hour before breakfast time, and feel that it's a good opportunity to begin this. I am inspired to it particularly, from having been gazing at the birthday present likenesses. It was very nice and thoughtful to send them. I have been sometimes longing to know, how they all looked. Every time you wrote about Fred coming home looking so well, & so grown, and so improved, I kept saying to myself, why does it not occur to her to send a photo, if all these changes are taking place, and last mail, I had quite a longing to have photos. It really was the nicest Birthday offering you could have made.

There again, they are the best photos that ever were taken of them, even to Tom's sailor suit, Binney's neck tie, & the new Tussar Silk dresses, there does not seem to be a flaw. Jeannie & Tom are the least changed, Jeannie, having arrived at perfection previously, will account for her case, but as for Tom, he almost makes me think, I could run about with him on my shoulders as I did in Karachi Harbour, do you remember? His (Tom's) likeness is splendid, so distinct and natural in the expression of his face and attitude, one can see clearly that it must be exactly like him, as he appears in every day life. Fred is almost out of my recollection. Has he not changed and improved? It took me a long time, and a great many comparisons with his former likeness, to make me believe, one boy represented could grow into the other. Binney looks more like the man, & his likeness of last year, both in the group and singly, were so good, that he slides one towards the other, more naturally. Jeannie, as I said before, is less changed. The likeness is just exactly what I remember here, & I can fancy her jumping up, pulling her dress down with a funny little jerk, to look more becoming, I suppose, & say Yes, Father!! in

her bright cheerful way. None of her late likenesses did her credit, but this is exactly what I want to see. I have been looking them all over, with a magnifying glass. How well her (Jeannie's) eyes have taken and what nice eyes they are. Intelligence shines out of them. Bessie is not the old Bessie I used to know. She is a young lady, and a pretty one too. There is something of the look of Binney in her face, but excepting that, it seems to me, there is not the slightest resemblance to any of us. I suppose if I could see the natural colour of her hair and complexion, I should get over the difficulty, but now I can't fit her likeness and my recollection of it a bit. Have you got a copy ...



[sheet/s missing or may be two different letters close together in date]

... that he has, by earning that scholarship, really done something towards his education himself. Now, to think he should be deprived of his chance, does seem hard. At the same time, darling, tis very certain if much more money is required to be laid out for education, five years hence when I have to retire, we shall starve. Oh dear! If only Binney had succeeded.

What does Fred think of joining the Marine Infantry? Or is there any other opening for him, where he could be started in life, without our ruining ourselves, and the rest of the family.

That Bedford school & living scheme is a very good one, darling, providing it did not mean perpetual separation from me. I could not possibly save money enough to

go home to you, darling & Oh dear!! I have often thought, there would be many places where you could live more cheaply, if you once separated yourself from Ladbrook Grove, & got clear of the Miss Keeling connection. But darling, as I before said, to do all this now, would involve separation from me, & my punishment to a greater extent than I care to consent to.

I cannot quite make out from your letter when the Parkers are going to sail, & come out to their Father. You say the Aunt and Uncle are to return on the 10th, & the girls are to sail on the 13th. You can scarcely mean Sep!, I should think. I wish I could know. Parker gets a retreat established for his girls, whether he is with them or not. That neighbourhood might do for you, being within reach of me &, enable us to live with a better chance of avoiding future starvation. But all this may be vain talking. If I did but know what my prospects were to be.

I am in hopes of getting out of this house very shortly, and finding a little approach to comfort in our new premises. There will be more room, & less contact with my assistant, with whom I am saddled past amending, & how I hate him. There seems no possible chance of getting clear of him. Our new house will have much more room, & it will be nearer the work, & have other advantages. I will then sell my pony, & save that, having the trolley near, within a few steps of the bungalow door. We appear to have worked through our rainy season, and may look forward to settled weather (there was not much rain, by the way), & finishing up our work. Must stop now - breakfast time but will leave this open in case there is something more to write.

Love to all, Darling, Ever your own, Fred.

Emmie and family are at present living in London (Ladbrook Grove), but are thinking of moving to Bedford. I am not sure why Fred thinks this will separate him from Emmie for longer, whether it is the cost involved, or that something will keep her in Bedford.

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Mandalay, 15 Oct 87

Emmie darling

I am beginning this morning, though there will not be much time to devote to this, as I went out, after making up my mind to stay in, and did not get back till pretty late. However I have Sunday before me, without any work to interfere. I have a lot to say stowed away below, but shall not be able to get at it in this sitting, & must just scribble on in a desultory way, till forced to stop, by the circumstance of breakfast. No change has taken place in my surroundings, which have been more humdrum than usual.

I am gradually losing the fear of a return of my old complaint, and feel comforted in the notion that I can eat anything. My soup, at short intervals during the day, has been dropped, which I am very glad of, as our Cook nearly poisoned us. His soup is so bad. Did you ever hear of burnt onions being used to colour soup? We were so informed yesterday, & have forbidden burnt onions, under a penalty of instant execution. There is something very specific in the nastiness of our soup, & we hope it has been

discovered. I am sticking to one piece of invalid-ness, however, having toast always instead of bread. It seems a great improvement, & I insist on it being nicely made.

Stopped here by work. Tis now Sunday morning, & I am alone. Some business is in hand however to distract me. A design for part of the big Bridge has just come, and I must go out, & see it put in hand. Buyers has taken 9 months in hatching this production, and all this time the work has been waiting, and after all the waiting, he says, the design need not be carried out. Anything will do. He might have told me that, at first. Now, however, I must lose no time. This Bridge must be finished, in spite of all the difficulties that stupid idiots throw in the way. Another trouble is to be put upon me. Two locomotives and trains are to be sent up, to be unloaded here for someone else, Owen to wit, and, I suppose, I shall have to take the bother and trouble of the whole business on my shoulders. The water has gone down so much, that all previous appliances for unloading are useless, and I have to make an entirely new thing of it. Tis no use getting in a *wax* about it. Buyers has the most disagreeable way of saying and doing everything, & always riles me, & Owen is also affected by him, in the same manner. ...

*sheets/s missing*

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Mandalay, 29 Oct 1887

Emmie darling

I have contemplated this morning, as giving me an opportunity for a good long letter to you, but, alas, it is likely to be cut very short. I must confess to being very deliberate over *chota hazri*, but that is legitimate, when not going out in the work. After that, visitors came, and jawed, and bothered me. First the Dr. who used to be civil surgeon, then the Ex.Eng. of Roads & Bridges, then a telegram to say a cylinder had been broken, up at the Bridge, which, by the way, will probably take me up there before this is finished. I have spent most of my time there lately, only come back on Thursday morning, & here I am, going up again.

Last week, we were in the agonies of fixing, beyond recall, of the level of our first pier, at which all others must be made to correspond. I had written & telegraphed many times to the Chief, telling what was to happen, and asking sanction, to stop at the place I proposed, but he took no notice, & I, driven desperate, acted on my own judgement.

This is Sunday afternoon, and I am at Myobingye. As I said on other page, I felt bound to come out, & see about the broken cylinder, & consequently, to make that possible, I found myself overwhelmed with work, without a moment to write a line in this. I have the satisfaction, of knowing there is a good deal of work polished off, and I can see, on the spot, all about the broken cylinder. Tis a great big thing, & cost a good deal of money, & is utterly smashed, & useless. They have not been judicious in regard to the strength of the rope used. But I could not be here all the time myself. I must make the best of it for Newham's sake, & possibly they won't make out anything serious about it. The cylinder in question is like the length of a well, which you used to see, in Sinde, being sunk, but it is of cast iron, 8 feet in diameter and 8 feet long, & as it weighed 3½

tons, they should have been more careful in trusting to their rope, & if I had been there, it would not have happened. I must write a report about it.

All this, darling, will prevent you having much of a letter, as I think it possible, I must stay up here tomorrow, & send this in, with what I have time to scribble off here.

I was inveigled off, to partake in a shooting *bandobast*, an immense beat inaugurated by Bradley, with 8 guns and a few hundreds of beaters, the result being, I suspect, the usual one, of a big beat, no bag at all. I did not bring my gun, as I had not even time to order it out, after I decided that I must come up, but I went off out to the "Meet", and found there was one spare gun to be used, before the snipe shooting began, and this I took, & trudged with, for 2½ hours, & never fired a shot, nor saw anything to shoot. At the end of that time, I came on to the road that would bring me home, & my feet & ankles being soaking wet, I deemed it advisable to come home, rather than trudge other 2 hours, and sit in wet feet through breakfast. Glad I did now, as I feel a little rheumatic already.

There is such a lot to answer in your letter, darling, that I am not sure I can do much towards it, at this sitting. I must go out again soon, but may manage to arrange for some spare time tomorrow, if I stay out here, & write report about accident, & send trolley in, late in evening, with letters. That is, I think, the only way, I can manage the business. The mail leaves tomorrow evening, & if I go in myself, other office work will be forced on me, so that I shall not have time for the report. By staying here, I shall see to the work, write report, & have some time for this also, if I have any luck.

This is now Monday afternoon. I have done a good deal of work, but have more to do before mail time, & so have only a few more words that I can add.

1st - the Bedford business seems promising, but appears to depend on getting the money, to invest in this lady's function. As I take it, there will have to be a promise to buy in March, if not before. However the question will probably be all settled, before this reaches.

Two or three times, Pet, you have written, about Jeannie and Will Robinson getting fond of each other. I hope it won't become anything more. He is, I dare say, as good a young fellow as she would ever meet, but there can be no prospect, of his being able to change his state, for many many years. I know, tis of no use, using arguments or discussing the matter, to produce any change of views in young people's mind (Don't you, darling?) & things must take their chance, but it is quite possible, the idea, of anything serious, may not occur to either of them, and let us hope it may not. Don't do anything to produce the notions.

Now about Fred. I cannot now, and I have not yet, gone into the money (actual) question of it, but, as I wrote before, I should be sorry, if the poor boy was forced into something he did not like, after he has given promise of being able to succeed in the best. His inclination, you have always told me, Pet, was strongly against a military life, and to compel him to go into the Marines, against his choice, strikes me as rather hard, but the papers are all in Mandalay, & I cannot get at them now, to go into the expenses part of the question.

Newham has just come, to talk about some work, & I must turn to my report, which has to go, with this, to Mandalay. You must try not to be hurt at this short letter, darling. I have to excuse myself so often for such, that short letters are getting to be the normal thing.

Oh! by the way, about Mr Milford, I was quite startled at his likeness, how young he looks. I formed an idea, why I know not, of someone so very different. It is of course absurd to try & form a notion from a photograph only, much less without even that, but one always does, you know. I recollect, now, the name of the master who greeted Fred, when we went with him to Haileybury, now that you mention it, Mr. Russel, & I fancy that his looks may have had something to do with the notion I formed of the other. I dare say Mr. M. will be overwhelmed with my letter, if Binney had been quoting to him, from my remarks in letters to you. If I remember, my ideas of the business were given pretty fully to you, & the letter to him direct will be somewhat similar, put in stiffer language, as being written to a stranger, & I, my fancy was, that I was writing to an older man. However you saw my letter before it was sent, so there can't have been much harm done, & if there was, you probably have not sent it.

I must really stop now, & do my work.

Warmest love to all, Your own, Fred

I have just finished the work I had to do, but there is no time left, as the men are waiting, with trolley, to start to Mandalay with the letters. F.L.D.

The comments about "Jeannie and Will Robinson getting fond of each other" hint at Fred and Emily's own courtship. Jeannie did eventually get married, but not for 12 years, and not to Will Robinson, so Fred and Emily's tactful ignoring of the situation obviously was the right course of action! Fred's sister (in Canada) is Sophie Robinson. I assume that Will Robinson is her son, and so Fred's nephew and Jeannie's cousin..

~~~~~

Mandalay, 12 Nov 87

Emmie darling

Here I am with circumstances rather favorable for a decent letter.

1. Buyers has gone, & I feel such a relief, amounting almost to exhilaration.
2. I seem to have no distemper of any kind.
3. I am in our new clean home, with plenty of room, and Alexander far off at the other end of the house. Oh, how that man used to burthen me, in our other place. There is just a little lack of time, however, as I have been out all morning, & time, to finish this proper, will not be at this sitting.

Our new house has such a lot to recommend it, tis clean, tis roomy, tis far away from any one who can bother, & close to my work, & the rails, which lead any where to my work. I feel identified with the R'way, & everything & everybody else seem alien.

I have had a fidgety time of it this last week, rather. Expected Buyers last Saturday, met him Sunday, took him up the line, went back, after being a day here a day, suddenly to find him turned again on my hands. Owen was ill, & scarcely able to speak,

let alone do any work, or have any bother, so Buyers wisely came away. The result was that I had two days more of him than my share. He is such an ass. There! However I am done with him personally for one while.

I have just made an arrangement this morning, which would be dangerous, if I was in a place I liked and wanted to stay in. I am starting a garden. The ground is being cleared, huts moved away, orders given for a fence, & arrangement for the Johnny who is to till the ground. The seeds were sent for, some time ago. I don't know what will come of it, but if it brings about a transfer, I should not so much mind, before the vegetables are eaten.

Now, darling, about your letter dated 11th to 14 Oct. Talk about letters doing one good, that did me good & no mistake. My spirits went up 20 degrees, notwithstanding Buyers being here, & I seemed to have got a new lease. What a lot of good things had happened to you, darling. I certainly have many blessings to be thankful for, through you, & what happens to you, darling, & it makes me feel somewhat consoled, as to all the ill luck which happens to myself, having to live out here alone, & being away from you, being the principal one just now, darling.

Now, about your good things. The Bedford bandobast seems to be very flourishing. The house appeared to have been secured, and Miss Binney, letting you have the money till yours comes, has helped you over the difficulty just at the nick of time. Oh! how good she is! Tom's theory, that the longer you wait for a letter, the better the news is, seems to be coming true with regard to your affairs, darling. You have waited and worried about that money, and about your arrangements that were depending on them, so long, that the present state of things seems almost to make up for it. You are a bad hand at waiting, darling, & you get so unhappy. I often think that you wear yourself out, with worry and anxiety, when anything is keeping you waiting, or going wrong from waiting. You are always doing the best you can, and your judgment about things is always right. So I don't know why you should be so unhappy! because things have to wait a little. Never mind, you are the best darling of a wife man ever had, and search the world over, none other, half so suitable for me and our children, could be found. As for those children, there never were children better provided with a mother, and what a blessing it is, for them, your being with them. If they would only spare me a little share.

Oh dear! I have had interruptions started already. The Tel. Office is open, the Clerks have come, the *chuprassy* is bothering for a lock, to lock up spare boxes, & I have been making a small attempt at putting things to rights, but unfortunately I make a bad fist of embellishing, & if I only had you to sort things, and find places for them, then I should soon be fairly comfortable, but I am no good at it, & was never intended to be alone. I did one good job, got out, and cleaned up Jeannie's vase. It was on a bracket in the other house, but here it is now, on a shelf, among a lot of things that look like lumber.

I was stopped here, darling, by work & bother of sorts, and it is now Sunday morning, and last time of writing. I have to go out to the Bridge this afternoon, and not come back before mail time.

Now for your letter, darling, little things first. I said above, I think, how you pleased and cheered me up, by letters of the good luck that you were having. There is nothing like helping yourself to start with, to get help elsewhere, & you have a great deal of energy and enterprise in that, darling, (helping yourself). It seems to me, Bessie is getting to be the thinking, wise one of the family. She discovered the date of the Apples arrivals - that Binney had packed his money in the trunk that was left behind. She will be able to keep you all straight, and I am very proud of her. How I wish I could see you all in the midst of what you write about.

I must not forget to send this to Miss Binney, it, having 2nd of Exchange, may make its going straight, of much importance, as the 1st will go to the old address, by the last mail. I had a strong inclination to send to Miss Binney, but I dare say the letter will go all right, through your old landlady. It seems, there can not be the least doubt, that you will be there (I mean, at Bedford) shortly after writing the letter now before me. Don't forget to send me a map of the place, and position of the house on, and I want to know how you get there by train. An idea has been in my mind very often, and it seems almost to come more suitable now, if I could afford it, of getting Bessie over, to keep a house for us, till I go home. Now that you have taken the Bedford place, 5 years at the outside hence, I must leave the service, and retire on pension, & it sometimes occurs to me that Bessie would come, but on the other hand, I fancy sometimes, that she would not be a very good hand at managing children and young people. I find it impossible, however, to do anything in the way of a decision, without talking it over with you, so be sure in anything you may write or say or do. Let nothing be so decided as to cause disappointment by a change.

Before next hot weather, I shall have finished the work here, & something may be known better as to future prospects, but it's all dark at present. There is not work enough to employ all the special favorites of Gvt., & how I am to be provided for is unfathomable. The thing I look forward to, darling, as to be attained before anything else is, having you with me, & when I can see my way, it must be managed somehow.

With regard to your money arrangements, you should open a Banking a/c on your own book. It will be very round about to send to Miss Binney, & have her give you a cheque, to be sent back to you. The Bedford Bank would do the whole thing for you direct, at one operation, & probably there would be no charge, whereas for Miss B to act as you suggest, would cost her something. The money would have to be arranged for, by her, to be sent to Bedford.

I am coming to end of my paper, with many things unwritten, but the bill of Ex must go, to make you safe, considering change of address. Many things bothering, trying to put house in order, seeds come, wants to arrange about garden, pay bills, send for stores, all too bad on a lone man.

All my love darling to you and ours, ever your own, Fred.

*I think that his plan means getting his sister Bessie (who is living in Canada) to come to England to look after the children, while Emmie comes out to India. Sister Bessie is*

*unmarried, so might find children a challenge! This Bessie should not be confused with their daughter Bessie (which Fred manages to do, later!)*

*At this time, cheques cost money to process. If Miss Binney was handling Emily's money affairs for her, she would have to pay this, which seemed unfair.*

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Mandalay, 26 Nov 87

Emmie darling

I have a purposeless sort of feeling on me this morning, although everything apparently conduces to my writing a proper letter. One thing upsets me - the garden. They had dug it up, and it has been left in lumps the size of your head, and heaps & hollows 3 feet high & deep in various parts. I have been away, & Alexander said they were doing it all right, but the result is most lamentable, while my seeds are sprouted and ready to put in, cannot in fact be left later than tomorrow.

I must not write another word before - The Telegram has come - "To Burmah from Bedford Dibblee Mandalay Burmah - 500 sent Dibblee. I got it on the 24th, and if the time was the same with you as here, it would be 18 hours getting here, but allowing for our time being earlier, that is for your 3 o'clock being 924 in the evening, the telegram was about 24 hours from the time it left you, till it reached here. I calculate, it will make about Rs 7200 when realized here.

It gave me a strange feeling, when I read your message, darling, the only other sea cable message was that from your Father, to say you were going to me, before we were married. I dare say you remember. To think that I could hear from you in 24 hours - I was out at Myobingye, near the Bridge, when head Clerk wired, there was an urgent private message to me, arrived at the office Mandalay from the Govt. Tel. - we have only a private Railway wire along the line - and asking if he should open, & send it. I jumped, in an instant, to the conclusion it was from you, and probably about the money. It was like thought reading, as coming from you to me, & my jumping to the conclusions like a flash, & being right too seemed as though I had got, for the time, your instinct. You know, I always told you, you are the most wonderful woman I know, in arriving at a conclusion, & in being right.

I went out here, to see about the garden. From seeing me moving about, they got attracted. The contractor came up, and two subordinates, and about 50 men and women. They are working away now, & I dare say something will come of it. It is not quite clear how it is to be paid for, but I will only pay a reasonable amount, and make Government pay the rest, but, I think, by evening time, I shall be able to put some of my started seeds into the ground, & then I shall work on gradually. I dare say, my old gardening instinct would come...

Subsequent sheet/s are missing.

See start of this book for the marriage telegram.

The money mentioned in the telegram is £500. The exchange rate is therefore about 14 rupees to the pound. Fred's mother died 16 March 1886. I don't have her will, but the length of time to this letter sounds like the time that probate would take. .

~~~~~

*This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date early December 1887*

*sheet/s missing*

... deposit. I can get the necessary certificate, the amount being well within what I am entitled to deposit, and the office will be so far open, that the pay't can be made during Xmas holidays.

This is now Monday afternoon. I came in from Myobingye this morning, & am going out again now very soon, & have so much business on hand, that I cannot write anything rational in this. There was a lot in your letters, Nov 10 & 11, that I wanted to gossip about, darling, but can't be helped now. It was a nice cheerful letter, Pet. Many thanks for it!

You seem to be settling down at Bedford, and I do so hope you will continue to like it. The great point is - t'will be more like a home for the children, & they can learn a lot, which they never had a chance to know before. I am very pleased at Jeannie taking to cooking. It was that charm in you, I think, that finally conquered me, so many years ago. Hot cakes & things make a great impression in a man's heart.

I fancy I could write on a lot more but must refrain, so many business matters to be polished off, & time has nearly come for ordering the trolley. Love to all. Thank Fred for the pen & ink etching. It was very well done.

Every your own, Fred

~~~~~

Mandalay, 17 Dec 87

Emmie darling

This is now the third day since your letter came in, & I have not written a line, so must make a commencement. I have been bothered about a lot of things, and was putting off till I thought a chance would come for a decent letter, but today is just about the worst chance possible, as I have a feverish attack, nothing of importance, but enough to make me feel depressed and utterly stupid. The weather is very cold and chilly & I suppose I got chilled, and that brings the fever.

I have all sorts of pretty nice things to thank you for, darling. This is now 7 in the evening. I had sat me down an hour ago to write at this, when I heard a tap tap with a stick, on the door, and a man appeared, who has sat talking for just an hour, so you have been cheated.

I got the map of Bedfordshire, and the photographs of Bedford, all right, darling, and am so pleased to get them. How pretty is that walk by the river - Embankment Promenade. How I wish I could turn to the right before reaching the Bridge and find Castle Road. I am so weary of being alone. Your surroundings in the town seem to be as nice as anything that could be wished for, and as you seem to be making friends and acquaintances, there ought to be nothing to detract from the advantages over London lodgings. I did think you would feel being so far away from Miss Binney and the others, when you want them, but your having Mrs Parker, & then Charlie (the promise of) in

such a short time, shows you are not likely to feel that want. It was extraordinary coming across Mr and Mrs Clarke in that way, & I have no doubt there will be lots of such surprises. At any rate you will see plenty, who know those you know.

This is Sunday morning, and I have lost the whole of it. I went out with Alexander, to see something regarding the work, and when wandering about, two visitors came up, & they have only just been got rid of. Eleven o'clock. It is pleasant having people come in, it makes one feel a little less lonely, & partly dispelled the idea of being outside the world entirely, but I would much have preferred, that they had left me alone this morning. I want, and ought, to go out to the Bridge tomorrow, and stay two or three days as usual, & therefore this must be finished this morning.

Lots of thanks, darling, for the Map. I like it beyond telling. I like to understand your geography, & I begin to know something about it. I have gone by the Great Northern, past the stations Hitchin and Biggleswade, that goes from Kings Cross, & I think, you said, you went from St Pancras, which would be by the Midland Railway, and you would go through Luton. I want you to send me an ABC Railway time table or a Bradshaw, with a map of England on it, showing the railways, then I will know all about it. You know, darling, I never travelled about England much, and the geography in my mind is a bit shady, but I must know all about your surroundings. I have looked over all my old books of that kind, in the hope of finding something, & can not find any thing in the shape of a map of England any where. You certainly have plenty of Railway going in every direction.

Your discovery, about the foggy days having disappeared, darling, is suggestive, of one of the great advantages over your London lodgings, the better air, & freedom from fog and smut. I often thought, that it was a great drawback for the girl and Lora, living so continually in London, in their growing days, & I feel sure you will all be better. I always used to be struck with what you said, of the Boys looking so healthy & well, when they came back from the holidays, and then think of poor little Tom, being in London all the time. I think the river, being, as I make it out, close at hand, will be a great thing for Boys in holidays. No doubt, there are plenty of chances of hiring boats etc, & Binney, with his Oxford Experience, will be able to give Fred a start, in real science.

Talk of the river being near at hand, there appear to be two or three bends of it, close to the town on all sides, so that a mixed journey, $\frac{1}{2}$ land and $\frac{1}{2}$ water, could be made in excursions. The walks, with pleasant young companions of their own ages, will be so nice for the Girls. Having nice companions, who have been brought up little ladies, is the best thing that the Girls can have, to make proper sorts of Girls out of them, and I have a very strong belief, that ours are proper sort of girls, and will do their companions good.

I am glad young George Parker is within reach of you, & that you can give him small pleasures at times. Parker is the man in India whom I think most of, & a good turn done to him, or his, is well deserved. I have not heard from him lately. There is an impression that he owes me in correspondence, but I don't know his address. I must write to his Agents soon if I don't hear. Since his young ladies have come, I have heard

nothing, & I don't know how to get at him, with a letter that will make him reveal himself.

It was so nice your meeting the Clarkes, & his remembering about Tom's name was a good joke. You have made a good start in acquaintance line, & there is one thing you feel sure of, those that come to know you at all are sure to like you, you dear Old Pet. There never was any one so capable, of walking into people's affections, especially when you wish to.

I was interrupted here, to go to breakfast, after which I did sundries and then some business. Now I have before me a whole pile of letters by mail, which must be polished off tonight, but in any case, as I have to send the 2nd of Exchange, there would not be room for much more.

About Binney's Exam for scholarship - The notion, I have is, that he went up for one, but is not sure that he will pass, or get it rather, and this paper, for Keble College, is another he means to try for. I hope he will be successful for one of them. It is very important that he should do something in that way.

I have just been trying an experiment with my windows, and have got a most perfect imitation of frost on them that you can imagine, such pretty patterns, & all sorts of variety in them, but I can scarcely persuade myself, that I am in an English or Canadian winter. Perhaps, when I wake up tomorrow about half asleep, I might manage something in a dream, but, alas, there will be mosquito curtains round me, that will dispel any such allusions.

Thank Jeannie for her letter. It was a very nice one, & I think from it, she enjoys the change in her surroundings. It is great fun, you going to see the Foot ball match and taking an interest in the Oxford Team, because you belong to Oxford, I suppose, now, but it is a conversion, coming round to care for Foot Ball. There is no room for more paper, so I'll wind up.

Love to all especially to yourself, darling, Ever your own, Fred.
I have got rid of my feverish attack, & feel all right to day.

Binney matriculated (started his course) at Oxford, 15 October 1887. It sounds as if he's applying for college scholarships (which provide money towards studying) at different colleges. The "science" is how to row!

Parker used to be Fred (senior)'s boss in India, and is now his friend. His family seemed to be living in Bedford, except his daughters, who have come out to India to be with him. "they came back from the holidays" - I think Fred means - when they come back for the holidays. Binney and Fred (junior) were at boarding school, and Tom was not, so he was stuck at home in polluted London the whole time. "allusions" - illusions!

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Mandalay, 23 Dec 1887

Emmie darling

This is now 6.30, and I am making the most of the time, as it will be shorter this week than usual. The English mail was a day late, & only reach here this afternoon

instead of Thursday morning, and ever since I got hold of my letters, I have been busy & no mistake! It was the bill of exchange's arrival that exercised me. If it had not got here this mail, I feel I should scarcely have managed getting the payt. to the fund made, but such luck as it was, arriving today, I scribbled off a letter to the Bank at once, and managed to get it enclosed, and sent in time to be registered. It was too much to risk in an ordinary letter. Now it will soon be on the way to Rangoon, & I have drawn against it already, & tis sure to be in time. I believe I explained all about what the investment was, in the Fund. In the first place, the security is the Govt. of India, not likely to go bankrupt. I shall get 4% compound interest, up to the date of my leaving the service, & the sum total can be drawn, when I do leave. I can't touch it in an ordinary way, but can draw to pay my passage home, & your passage. Ask Miss B, and your other friends, who are investing their legacies, if they have done better than that. The amount was R7058 for £500. That, of itself, would be a great profit, if I was going to use the money here, but it will depend on the rate of exchange. I want to take the money home again, whether anything is really made on that. The rate of exchange seems to have been 1/5 for Rupee. It is a satisfaction to know it has come safe, & in time for my purpose.

Now I must tell about my proposed doings for Xmas. Owen has asked all, out to him, at Xmas day, & we expect to have quite a jollification. We have to start from here, tomorrow, about one, and go by trolley part of the way, & then by train the rest, so as to reach Kyanksai before dark, not being supposed to run trains after dark. I shall have a busy day, early part of tomorrow, before starting, & probably shall not get back before the mail leaves on Monday evening, so you see, darling, you are being punished, in a scanty letter, for my jollification. I dare say, it will be pleasant. We are to have a shoot, & then festivities, & not a doubt it will be more like a Merry Xmas to me, than otherwise might have been.

Your letter was an awfully fine Xmas present to me, Pet, containing the looked for bill, that might have been late, and the news of Binney's success. It was indeed good news to me, could not have had a Xmas present more welcome, & tell Binney he can be proud of it. A present of £40 to the Family would be thought a handsome thing, and that is what his getting that Exhibition amounts to. Tell Fred too, that I am very proud of his news for me, & I wish him success in getting this medal. I think we have reason to be proud of our boys. Binney's letters, to you and to Jeannie, were very nice ones, & I like to see them, darling, but make him write on thin paper, & I will not be cheated out of so much of yours, Pet, when you enclose them. It was all right this time, when there was a second envelope.

Thank Jeannie and Bessie also for their letters. I shall do something in the way of correspondence return, some of these days, but too much is not to be expected of me. Tell Bessie I am proud of her powers of dignified bearing. To keep her countenance, and awe four shopmen so that they dare not laugh, with the interior of a bad egg dripping down her dress, was a triumph of its kind. Bessie must have been cut out for a Duchess. I think you are right, Pet, about Bessie being like Kathleen. She certainly is different from



ny of the rest of our flock. She is not like you or your family, & not like me, but I think the likeness is to my Father. Kathleen was always thought to be like him.

You all seem to be enjoying the change to Bedford. I think I said in a previous letter, it would do those Londoners good. Jeannie & Bessie and Tom had too much of London air, for growing young people (tell Jeannie "don't be offended") You, darling, also will be better, I am sure. I am inclined to think, a little of Bedford would do me good.

Now, darling, you must all forgive my omission to send things home. I have thought of it, many times, but really there is absolutely nothing to send from this wretched place, and everything is very expensive. There is just one thing that I have in my mind, & I shall go and look at it tomorrow, but meanwhile won't mention. There is another thing, Pet, just when I was sending the remittance that would reach you about this time, my banking a/c was very very low, & I did not want to spend an *anna* more than was for absolute necessities.

Alexander has come in & it's dinner time, so I'll stop for this sitting, and try to spare a little time of my busy forenoon tomorrow.

This is now Saturday morning, Christmas eve, & I have spent a lot of time looking up what I thought of sending. I succeeded in getting nearly what I wanted, and you must wait till the delivery of Book Post to see what it is, for distribution. I suppose, that you have given the children presents of some little things in my name, & with my love. Give that now to them all separately & individually, Binney, Jeannie, Fred, Bessie & Tom.

I feel inwardly that there are several things more in your letters, Pet, that I want to answer. I am too hurried though to make much out of it. I am glad of the prospect of the young people being able to have skating. They are all Canadians, & they ought to be able to do so well.

Oh, the interruptions - the *babus* have come and there's a lot to do before closing office for holidays.

That was not a very good shot at the name of the place where the Bridge is. The name of the River is Myitnge, pronounced Minyea with certain inflections of sound not to be written. The name of the place is Myobingye. The first syllable is the mew of a cat, with bingy added. The Burmese language is the most difficult to catch by the ear, or pronounce when written, of any that I have come across. Even the young men, who have been trying to learn, have nearly all given up in despair, & it is very amusing to hear a dispute as to the meaning of a certain word. No two of them ever agree, and one man, who is supposed to be the best, could stop the *punkah wallah* pulling, but utterly fail in making him understand how to go on again.

We are going to start on one Excursion just after breakfast. Tis now breakfast time, and I must stop. I might tell you, I feel particularly jolly & well this morning. I have the thickest woollen coat & trousers on, that I possess, & still feel cold. Have met two or three people who looked quite jolly, but my great idea, of enjoyment of Mandalay, is to go out of it. The Chief Commissioner is here, & Mrs Chief, & daughter, & baby, and

daughter's fiancée. I have not called, nor did I go to meet them at the steamer, & hope I shall be left out from the ball, they are going to give Saturday next. I think I won't go.

Now, darling, I will stop. I hope you are all having a pleasant jolly time & that tomorrow may be a happy day for you and all our dear children

God Bless you all. Your own, Fred

It's now nearly 5, Pet, and I have not had a moment to myself. Such a lot of office work, that I have not had one moment to myself, not even time for a *cheroot* after breakfast, or for a bath, and now I am hungering for *tiffin*. They will overwhelm me again, probably, in a few minutes, I suppose, & I am in a frame of mind quite beyond composing a letter. I think, I could sign my name to a letter copied by a Clerk, but nothing more. All your letters, as regards what I thought to reply to, has gone clean out of my head. So you will have to be content with this. Again love to all, Your own, Fred

I told you so, here they come!!

*An exhibition is less than a scholarship. Binney's exhibition is worth £40.*

*Kathleen - the sister of Fred (and so Bessie's aunt). Jeannie is about 18, and so presumably no longer one of the "growing young people".*

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Mandalay, 30 12/87

Emmie darling

The greatest pleasure I have had, this week, has been receipt of your letter. I was so rejoiced to hear, how nice and comfortable you were, with a prospect of a happy time for all our dear ones and yourself. All seemed to be going on well, with each of them, and the meeting at Xmas, at what is more like a home than the children have ever known before, ought to be very pleasant for them. It makes me sad to think, what their young lives have been, as regards all our preconceived notions of a home, so different from our Fathers' and Mothers' ideas, but they have been ignorant of what we thought it ought to be, and they have had little unhappiness, as far as we can know. The Boys have had a pleasant school life, if no proper home, & would have had very little of home, in the best of cases, that is, even if we had been at home. I suppose Jeannie's life at Miss Keeling, after she got old enough to think and feel much, must have been the most uncomfortable. The Girls will feel the benefit and happiness of your being with them, just when they most require care and kindness, & what moreover they want, as part of their education experience, the management of a house, as you, darling, are able to teach, better than any other woman I ever knew. Those girls will have reaped much benefit, by my privation in having to be without you for such long weary times. I must stop talking of my privations. The talk won't help them, & make you uncomfortable.

On the whole, I had a fairly good Xmas day, & I believe, with my surroundings, I could not have done much better. As I said in my last, we went up to Owen's, & spent Xmas & half the next day. I had not been to Kyanksai before, & there was a little to see. We had a shoot in the forenoon, & I went into the mud, as of old, and although I did not make a big bag, I did next best to the crack shot, and shamed Alexander, who splashed

about in the mud more, and made more talk, than all the rest of the party put together. He had to be snubbed, & put down by two of us ultimately. After the shoot, there was games, races, jumping, etc, which kept us on our feet, and walking about till dark, & I think I have not had such a hard day's work of physical exercise for years. Our dinner also was a good one, all among R'way men, with plenty to eat, although no conventionality. No turkey, no plum pudding, but lots of good wholesome food (not out of tins) and good fresh garden vegetables grown from Owen's own garden. We then sat up till 2 a.m. singing, three of the party being more than ordinary good performers (I don't count myself although I took part).

I was glad to get away from inhospitable Mandalay, where the only amusement would have been a hard day's work. That is the only chance of not feeling miserable, and that would have prevented the clerks and people having a holiday. There have been races - sorry affair from all I hear, Burma ponies that happened to be on the spot, without much attempt at arrangement, but, as I steadily had refused to subscribe, that or any other public institution in this wretched place, I decided that I would not go at all.

There are other races coming off this afternoon, and an "at home" at Chief Commissioner's, dancing this evening. I have urgent business at the line so that I can not participate. As to the Chief Com., I have shunned them. Before, I went to the steamer to meet them, every time, & went and called dutifully, and as far as I can ascertain, I am almost the only man, who has not been asked to dinner. So this time, I have not called, nor did I go to the steamer, nor will I go to the dance. As you know, darling, tis no privation for me to stop away, but the difference between treatment of the Railway (I being the senior man on this spot) is too marked, comparing that we had from Sir Charles Bernard, & the present man. They won't hesitate to give any amount of trouble, & considering that the Railway has done more for the country, than any thing else, we have a right to expect not to be ignored. There, I must stop about grievances. It is difficult to make a cheerful letter out of grievances.

I am going to have another shoot on New Year day, if we cannot arrange, that the party is too large. Our party has been formed, but the thing has been done, I think, by Alexander, and the people are rather incongruous.

I have still to look forward to the Parcel. The letters almost always come before, and this time it's no exception. It was, I think, due yesterday. Before saying much about the picture, which came all right, in the Chambers, I am going to wait for the advertisement of sail, which you say is in the box. There is a curious mixture of costumes and customs, which, I suppose, is the joke, but I won't commit myself, nor will I bid just yet. Thank Jeannie for the sketch of the streets in Bedford. I like maps, as you know, Pet, and it enables me to know my way, and follow you about.

I can not quite make out about Tom, what school is he at? In one of your letters, you said, you would not send him for half term, & were getting a *bandobast* for reading with a private Tutor (as I understand). Now he is at some school, where young Wilkins came near disgracing himself. I was stumped with a question of Owen's, "What school is your boy at?" and I could not tell that he was at any. Now I am flabbergasted again. You

are quite right, not to have much to say to the Wilkins family. I don't fancy the small boy, as a companion to Tom. The manners and habits of Indus Steam captains is not my idea of "haut ton" (translated freely "Top sawyer" - ask Jeannie).

I made a discovery the other day at Owens, but don't quite know if anything will come of it, & so must leave you to work it out. Owen's children, or some of them, are at Bedford. He did not know you were at Bedford, when he told me, and then after giving me the address, he said "I must get Mrs Dibblee's address tomorrow". He did not ask for it, or allude to the subject again, & so I did not, & know nothing more, than one or two or more of O's children are at Owen Snow's 15 Mill Street, Bedford. Quite close to you, as I can see by Jeannie's map sketch. You can make inquire, and learn what you can, & act on your own judgment. I will not mention the matter to Owen again unless he starts it. He is a very good fellow, and I like him better than most men I know in India, & unless he does not wish it, I would like you to see and know his children, but - did I even tell you? He is separated from his wife, who preferred a Young Assistant Engineer, and one of his children has a separate mother, without any sanctioned estimate, the said mother's proper function having been governess to his children. So you see, it is a little mixed, and unless I hear more from Owen, showing he wants them to be known, you had better content yourself with making inquiry. I will let you hear anything that I can learn here.

I was stopped for breakfast, and now work has begun, and preparation for going out to Myobingye. I shall come back again Monday, and might find time for more writing then, but it may be that Buyers and Mrs B will be here, and it is also possible, that they may keep me at Myobingye. So, to make things safe, I had better close this for the post (more business here) to prevent risk.

I told in my last, that the first of Exchange for Rs 7058/82 had come, and I was able to make my *bandobast* for this investment, which I believe is all right. The 2nd came by your last, darling, & the whole thing has been most business like on your part, Pet. I shall wait now till Monday's mail, which will give time for reply from the Bank, and shall then send 2nd to make sure. Having posted and registered the letters will make the payt. into fund all safe in any case, as I can prove having dispatched the cheque for payt., within the limiting time.

I have heard of young Bacon. There are many who know him here but I have not met him yet. His mother might tell him, to look me up, if he ever passes, or comes to Mandalay. That is more likely, than I to go where he may be. I will take care of him here, if ever he does come.

Now, darling, with all my love, and wishes for many a Happy New Year to all our dear ones, ever your own, Fred

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Mandalay, 7 Jan 88

Emmie darling

Things are not favorable for a good letter this time. First, the mail, bringing your letter, was a day and a half late. Next, I am saddled with Buyers and Mrs B, for three extra days, they having changed their minds as to going by this morning's steamer. They went down

last evening, and found that the mail steamer had stopped many miles down the river, & to catch it in returning to Rangoon, they would have to take a small steamer and go down this morning, so they came back to my *bungalow*, & are to inflict me till Monday evening, a nuisance. Buyers is to go out with me to Myobingye tomorrow, and return same day, and after that I think I shall hook it, & leave them to Alexander, who is a great "squire of dames", & trots round with Mrs B in first rate style.

Your letter of the 7th to 9th Dec, with Jeannie's, came in last night late. It was very nice, darling, and made me long so much to be with you, & I have been longing (I mean longing more than usual) ever since. Oh dear, oh dear! I have just learned, that the line is not to be opened here till 1st Jan next, & I suppose the work will be spun out so our work will not be finished till then. It gave me a sort of pang, although, after all, there could not, in any case, be a chance of our seeing each other before, or even for some time after that, but I have a fancy for pushing on, and being able to say, all is finished, in a proper length of period. The work of the division might have been all completed in 8 months, & to be kept dragging on for 2 years, seems like an attempt to keep us back from glory.

I was interrupted here to go to tub, and then *tiffin*. I ordered the office to close, being Saturday afternoon, & hoped to have a quiet afternoon for this, but tis not very successful up to now, but I'll write on & try my best. Tis very uncertain when Buyers may come and annoy me, by wanting to see something. He has written 2 letters from over the way.

I must tell you, darling, that the box has come, and I have got it open, but have not had time to go through contents, being anxious to get something down at this, before too many interruptions come. It has just occurred to me, that one thing in your last, which I intended to write about, was forgotten in winding up. About your sight, darling - I am sorry to hear, Pet, that yours is getting so bad. I suppose, tis only the usual thing, that you want stronger and stronger glasses. Mine has not changed much, but I can do with stronger glasses than when I commenced at 'em, so you'd better preserve yours to be handed on, like the boys clothes. I don't want anything on, when out of doors, or looking at distant objects. I couldn't make out quite that you did, darling, although you said you could see nothing without them. I supposed you meant nothing, like reading, sewing etc.

I thought, by the way, last Sunday (New Year's Day) that I come to it, that I could not see snipe properly, but I found it was the case with others that day also, so I was comforted. It was this, a lot of grass, that was growing about, was a dull brown colour, & when the birds flew low, they were just the colour of the grass. I missed them freely. However, I improved after a bit, & hit a good many, and in the end, made the 3rd best bag of the party. There were 6 guns out, and the bag was 87½ couple, that 175 birds, which was pretty good. I got 14 couple, and had one hour less shooting than any of the others. I beat Genl. Wolesley (brother of Lord Wolesley, our only Genl.) who was shooting beside me. I suppose, you know I am writing of the New Year's day shooting party, which I must have written about in my last, did I not? It was pretty hard work, 4 hours trudging through the paddy field, mud up to my ankles every step & sometimes

water above my knees, and I not in very good training. It is the first really good snipe shooting I have had since I left Sind. Last Xmas day & New year's day, I had a little, you remember, in Chota Nagpur, & last year, I should say, year before last, when, on that survey, I had some duck shooting, but for real snipe shooting, with proper, orthodox wading through the mud, the last good shooting I had was 10 years ago in Sind.

I had to stop here to go into the box, & take stock of the things, and since then, Buyers came in but he did not seem to want to talk about anything, so I let him go, saying I wanted to finish my English letters. I am not quite sure though, that I ought not to go and talk with him, as his original idea was to get me to walk about. Well, I acted on my impulse, & went & strolled with Buyers, and afterwards had a chat with Mrs B, & I think it pleased them. Mrs B seems very nice, very tall, & very thin, & looks as if she might be vinegarish, & sometimes when J.B. (Buyers) does not behave, I dare say she displays a flavour. Tis said, she keeps him in order, but that she is a first rate manager, & takes the best of care of him, so that's the great point & providing J.B. does not want to kick his heels over traces, I should think, he would be very comfortable. She has a very quiet, gentle way of speaking, & a lady-like manner. They have no children, & says she gets very lonely when her husband goes away. On the whole I like her.

Now for the box. The things are simply splendid. Those flannel shirts, & those pyjamas, & sleeping shirts are exactly what I wanted. All my flannel ones are worn out, & I had to take to the jute things, which are rather cold this weather. I have put off buying some flannel, & making warmer pyjamas, & I am glad of it now, darling. As for the socks, there never was a more perfectly timed present. Almost every pair of my brown ones were worn out, and the holes have been looped up together by the *boy* so often, that they won't hang together any longer. I have taken to the black ones of late, but they make my feet black, & I get unhappy. Those four new pairs, and the black ones for quiet strolling about evening times, will set me up completely.

Now for the other things. Tell Tom that the Photograph stand is execrable, I mean lovely. I shall have to get another table in my room, to display all the pretty things. As for the tea cozy, I think I must wear that. My iron tea pot is not worthy of such a thing. I have had the blue and white enamelled iron things, which you bought for me, at Army & Navy Stores, in use, and nothing else ever, since I came here, & all the time I was in camp, & strange to say, they are nearly all good and serviceable still. The Xmas cards are very pretty indeed. Yours is a dear little one, and the hand painted of Jeannie, & Bessie are very nicely done, and I value them because they did them for me. Tell Bessie, I hope hers is not intended as a likeness of any of her friends.

The Donkey's head in chalk (or charcoal) is Fred's, is it not. Tis exceedingly well done, a first rate copy, & shows that he can draw, & it will be a splendid thing for him, as an amusement, in after life. By the way, darling, if this is not Fred's, as I believe you told me it was, in a letter three weeks ago, tell the Artist how much I like it, save my credit. By the way, I cannot find what you said, would be in the box, some comical thing of Fred's, wanting to auction his picture. I got the picture two mails ago. A modern young

English 2 year old doing Hannibal, with a patent hot air stove doing altar, an old man pouring some bottled beer over a leg of mutton and sausages. The street arab in the corner, drawing, with a patent stop cock, a jug of beer & the picturesque butcher boy looking on. Where did he get the idea, from the Comic history of Rome? Or where.



I have just thought of it. Tell me, how did Binney return that half crown, which he borrowed from a passer-by at Wimbledon. You told me about it, long ago, & never said anything about how the half crown in question was returned. Mind, not forget, when you next write.

Quite right, darling, to insure the furniture. Tis always worth insuring when you have destructible property. You seemed to give me good news from all, & I hope so sincerely, that you are all having a happy pleasant time and that you think of this Exile.

I said, in my last, how pleased I was, at Binney's success over the Exhibition, but I fear I did not say half enough. It is an earnest of what he can do, & I hope he may do something more in the same line. He will now have to join the College (Balliol isn't it?) I take it, & for the future, can only go in for a scholarship belonging to Balliol, is that not so? but would he be precluded from trying for a scholarship in another College, and giving up the Exhibition? Tell him to explain. I know about the "Small" which is "Responsions" & "little go" all rolled up. In my time, Little Go had to be passed when the College terms were half over, that is when 6 terms out of the 12 had been kept, & it seems odd how so many exams can be bundled into one term.

I had a letter from Parker, by this last mail. He had his girls out in Camp with him, & wrote "They said they enjoyed it" and he thought Minnie did. They were just going to Patiala, where there'd probably be a lull for a time, & he hoped to have Umballa

made his headquarters. He sent his kindest regards, and best wishes to you, and his Love to the Boys and Girls.

I heard, that the Bill of Exchange had reached the bank, and had been cashed, & the amount was at my credit. I am sending £30 by this mail. Paper used up and dinner time gone half an hour ago. So I'll stop.

Warmest love to you and all our dear ones. Fred

*Fred (senior) was born in Canada, and educated there, so he didn't understand the Oxford collegiate system at all. You do not apply to Oxford University, you apply to a college at Oxford. "Little Go", "Responsions" and "Smalls" are all names for the same exam, according to OED, and they are one half way through the undergraduate course. The picture of Fred junior is indeed based on The Comic History of Rome as shown. Unfortunately, we don't have Fred's version!*

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Myobingye, 15 Jan 88

Emmie darling

My circumstances are different from anything before this time, & I don't know whether it will be beneficial for your letter or not. I am out at the place near the Bridge, because Newham is laid up, & I sent him in to Mandalay for a change, & to make him more comfortable, gave him up my room. This is rather a critical time for the Bridge, one pier being within 2 inches of ultimate depth, and another so placed, that I had to decide, whether it should go one foot, or seven foot more, that is 31 or 38 feet below the bottom of the river.

I went in Friday, got your letter (of the 13th to 16th Dec), did a day's work and came out again in the evening. I thought, I should have spare time yesterday, to make a beginning at this, but, alas, I had not a bit of spare time, what with looking after levelling & measuring at the Bridge, & inspecting brick field. I came in, to find it getting on to noon, & such a lot of work in telegrams before me. Then after breakfast, I had coolies to pay, Rs 3000 to distribute (a thing I had never in my life done personally before) and enter in cash book etc. Those said entries are not complete yet, by the way. Then, after that, I had to go over to the Bridge again, so that took me to dinner time, & made so tired, that I was not fit for anything. Now, I have seen to the cylinder sinking, & measured, & ought to be pretty free from bother, unless they come and report, that the cylinder has gone down with a jump. There is only $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the end of 500 feet, that has to go down now. I had a sort of fancy, that Newham would be very lonely at times, but to judge from what I personally have to do, when doing his work in addition to extra, when accounts are made up, his time must be fully occupied, with no room for "ennui".

I am not quite sure how I finished up my last, darling, but I must have told of Buyers and Mrs B having missed a steamer, & my being saddled with them another three days. They got off at last, to our delight. He is a dreadful man to do business with, & an awful bore to have about. I may have said, also, that I was not very fit, but did not make much of that, so that you would not feel unhappy about me. I had another attack, like

before, but it did not get exactly into dysentery, as I took it in time, and after a week of treatments and starvation, I prevented anything serious coming on. I have an awful horror of dysentery. I had a new Dr, whose treatment was different from the other mans, but, as he kept giving me small doses of Impecac with the instructions not to be sick all through the day, it was sufficiently disagreeable. After several days, it culminated. I had "P & M" (is that spelt right?) very badly, & then vowed I'd take no more. I am all right again now, darling, but not any more in love with this country.

Owen is determined on his leave, & the chances are, I shall have his division to do, as well as my own, unless, indeed, they take the opportunity of sending another man from India out, of the many who are idle there. Did I tell you? Hogarth is now on the line, at work in the Chiefs office. I wish him joy of it. The arrangement now is to open this part of the line in Jan next. That will give me plenty of time to finish the Bridge, & have all put ship-shape, & it will leave me probably the oldest man on the work, if I last so long.

How I wish there was 3 mo's leave due to me. I'd try and screw money enough together to go home to you, darling. I shall have to wait another year, in consequence of my going off on that trip, a year & half ago. How I regret it now. I feel quite dazed and muddled now, whenever I try to work out a *bandobast* for you, darling, & it makes me feel so low-spirited. I must stop that.

I did a little gardening here this morning, & got 6 radishes, the third crop from the garden. 1st being cress & mustard, 2nd 6 radishes, 3rd this morning 5 radishes, rather a sell for Newham, eating them in his absence. It's always the way with a garden. I have just been out to have a walk about, & as I was through the garden, two hours ago, I don't see much difference in it. I was beginning to feel dumpy rather, & thought I could write more pleasantly, after shaking myself a little.

The Tambourine came all safe, strange to say, by last mail. The box was all in pieces, but the canvas outside kept it together. Better get a tin box, darling, when sending anything. Fred's letter & Notice of Sale of the beautiful work of Art came also, & much bewilderment has been cleared up. I was puzzling over that Tambourine continually, could not find it in the parcel when I expected it, and could not make out about Fred's picture, which you had before written about. The Notice is not at all a bad joke, and if written off straight, it shows a very keen sense of humour, but it is his (Fred's) letter I like best, such an improvement in style and manner of expressing himself. He seems to go straight to what he wants to say, & says such a lot in a few words. I am very much pleased indeed. He inherits the faculty of expressing himself from darling, I think. Binney writes a good letter, but this of Fred's seems to cover more ground than B does. As you say, darling, we have every reason to be proud of our flock. Take them all round, they are as good, loveable, nice, young people as could be found anywhere, & I believe, more than half their goodness has arisen from you being with them so much. It is hard lines on me, though.

I forgot to mention the spectacles, darling, that you sent in the box. They suit me exactly and I am pretty well set up in the articles, if my sight does not change. Thank

Jeannie for the Tambourine. Tis very nicely done, but I grieve to say, I have no suitable place to hang it. The walls are all cut up with cupboards, and doors, & windows, & lamp brackets. Jeannie's vase is on one by the way (lamp bracket) & cannot be deposed, but I must find a place for the Tambourine. I don't like putting it up in a place shared by Alexander, as I never let him see these things. I do detest him so.

I was interrupted here by old Bowen, the Bridge Foreman, coming & hunting me out, to see something at the Bridge, and after that I had breakfast, & been asleep. I don't think there is much more in me to write. I feel low-spirited, & not up to writing.

You were all very jolly and cheerful, Pet, and had the prospect of a happy time before you. You will enjoy seeing them happy, darling. I quite understand, when you say, you wish it was all over, but you enjoy it, all the same, in seeing young people happy, you dear, unselfish, old Pet. You work and work, till you are almost quite used up, all to make others happy. Tis true what I write, every word. Your great delight is in making others happy. You did it for your Father, and others in your childhood, & now you are doing it for your own children. You deserve that they should love you, darling. Never was duty to children better done, than yours have been to your children. Oh how I wish I was with you all. I must stop this. Time to go down to the Bridge.

Best love to all yourself, more especially, darling, ever your own, Fred.
I will write more if there's chance.

Ipecac - drug once widely used as an expectorant (in low doses) and a rapid-acting emetic (in higher doses). "P & M" - not sure if this is what he wrote, but Fred is not sure he has the right term anyway. It's presumably a medical term for "vomiting and diarrhoea".

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Mandalay, 22 Jan 88

Emmie darling

I began this morning, with best of intentions, as regards this letter, intending to sit down to it, as soon as the sweeper was out of the way, but, as bad luck would have it, a visitor came along, in the person the Ex. Engineer Roads, and we talked, and walked, and loafed about, till now, after eleven. What a lot of good intentions there are, floating about. They are supposed to sink pretty low, however, eventually. Now I am only bent on making a beginning before breakfast.

My last was written out at Myobingye, when I was out, seeing to the work, so that Newham could have a holiday, & get cured of his ailment. Well, I stopped until Monday, came in here, & went out again Wednesday afternoon. We had crisis at that time, which wanted special looking after. Our pair of cylinders, which had been sunk 50 feet into the ground, got down to the proper depth, and had to be levelled, and measured very carefully, with a view to their adjustment, and the calculations necessary were something appalling. We are later than we expected to be, with this part of the work, but it won't be of any consequence, owing to all the rest of the line being late. I feel disappointed, however, in being kept back. Newham has gone back to his work better of

his particular ailment, but he is now threatened with Rheumatism, & it may, though I hope not, end in sick leave. That sort of Rheumatism is almost impossible to get rid of, without a change. I shall be awfully sorry, if he cannot finish the Bridge. He has been doing so well with it, all along.

I am feeling pretty fit for the day, though I had to go to the Dr hands last week, & I was very down in the mouth, and, Oh, how I longed for you, darling, to take care of me, and cheer me up! Oh dear!! I do get so low spirited here, all alone, when I am seedy. It began (the last business, I mean) just when I was writing to you, I think, Pet, and I thought I had better tell you afterwards. It was that old feeling, in my hands and feet, worse than I ever had it before, the result, I suppose, of weakness after the Dysentery. The Dr says it's nerves, with something of gouty symptoms in as much as it is influenced by the state of the digestion arrangement, but, I am glad to say, I believe, he, the Dr, has hit it off. The medicine, he is giving me, seems to have an effect at once, and perhaps, by good luck, this may be the way to a cure. You know, darling, how wretched it used to make me before, when you were with me, and you can imagine how I should be, when alone.

Alexander's being here makes it worse for me, I think. I do hate him so. Binney & his landlady relation to each other remind me of my feelings towards Alexander, only instead of turning me head away when he passes me, as B does, I have to eat with my *bête noir*, and talk to him. How I wish I could get rid of him out of the house. He wants to take privilege leave in a few months, & perhaps they may send me another assistant. I think I would rejoice in any change, as I cannot turn him out without a serious rupture. The only consolation I have, in this state of living, is that I can get away, & live most of my time at Myobingye, with Newham. I think I must have told you - I made a *bandobast* with Newham to pay my share of *bazaar*, & I always take my own liquor, so there is no constraint about my going there, & I get rid of Alexander. There is the drawback, however, that I can scarcely say I have a home. Just to think, when I have the best wife, that could have possibly been allotted to me, who suits me, and could make me more happy than anyone else in this world, that I must be on the opposite side of the world from her, & have no home.

You will come to the conclusion, darling, that I am alone now, Alexander away shooting and not even a servant about, alone with Vic at my feet & nothing to prevent my thoughts going where I will. I have often thought lately, that it may be good luck for Binney having missed his exam & not to have this sort of life to look forward to, if he can have in his future, as good a wife and as good children as I, & be more fortunate, in being with them in his home. I have made up my mind to go to Church this evening. I shall be able to think of you all, there, and I feel a strong inclination to go any way. I walked near to the church this morning, & thinking of you has suggested the idea. I have not been there for months, not since I moved into this bungalow. The distance now is greater, I have been away most of the Sundays, & when here, have felt no inclination to go.

Now, darling, about your letter, which is before me. First your fainting fit - I wish they would not happen. I know they do not seem to hurt you afterwards, Pet, but I

cannot help worrying. You are so strong in other respects, Pet, you do more than you ought to do, & fatigue yourself, when you ought to keep quiet. Does it have any connection with b--t-. You spoke of that as troubling, when you previously wrote. Do you know, darling, I cannot remember you ever having a fainting fit, when I was with you, & near you. You had bad hysterics once in my arms, but never a fainting fit. Tell me, am I not right? You would have frightened me, so that I should have remembered it. There is nothing to be done, I suppose, except that you should try and be quiet, when such things are likely to come on.

I rec. Toms' REPORT. There is one thing about it, that Tom must not be ashamed of, that is - his Tutor said he was "good", "very good" etc about almost everything he tried at. Fred's report is very satisfactory. I am a little anxious to hear the result of the medal contest, & hope you won't fail to let me know. It seems evident, the Haileybury masters take an interest in our boys, and we have great reason to be proud of them.

A big *dâk* has come in, Pet, and has upset my ideas. Besides, boy says, bath is ready, and as water gets cold very quickly, I must not tarry.

Here I am again! darling, I had my bath, opened the *dâk*, got a white shirt ready for church, ordered trolley, and just waiting for time to go to church. By the way, I must tell you, I heard from the Bank that they had arranged to send home £30, by last mail, but as it had to go through their Calcutta Branch, the 2nd would not be sent till next mail, to me here. I hope you will get it all right. I had Rs 500 to my credit at Bank at end of year, I am glad to say, although I had been feeling nervous about it, after the payment into the Prov. fund of the Rs 7058, which, as I told you, was satisfactorily settled. If I can keep on saving to that extent, there's no knowing, I might get money enough to go home.

Thank Bessie for her card. Tis very nicely etched indeed, though I am sorry for the "cut up" state of the party. I have a letter from Parker which I hope to answer tomorrow. Jeannie's remarks, about them being in Surrey, reminded me of it. My news of him seems pretty near the date of Jeannie's. Tis a long way from here to India. Thank Jeannie for her letter, darling, I am not up to writing directly, with limited time and little material. Tis time now, darling, to think of starting for church, but this shall be kept open, in case I can write more tomorrow.

Love to all & with my very warmest love to you, my darling, every your own, Fred. No time to write more today. Modern Society received, many thanks. The jokes, you refer to, are very good, & much appreciated. FLD.

*b---t - in a later letter, Fred talks of Emmie's "bad time", which sounds like a period.*

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This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date late January 1888

sheet/s missing

... Thank Jeannie for her letter and don't let her stop writing, although I do not manage to write to her myself direct. There is nothing to tell, more than I write to you about, and

especially when I am seedy & low-spirited, tis hard to find time for any more than I do write, so make her be good, and write as often as she can to me.

I think I must have told you, in my last, that I had stopped the "Pioneer" for you, & had arranged to send you another, and a cheaper paper, "The Weeks News". Well! Here you are! Now 6 back numbers. They came in all at once, and I send them, as they have a story in them. By the way, the said story, by "Bret Harte", was, I feared, not quite the thing for the girls, but after all, there is very mild wickedness, as it turned out, but you had better read first, before letting the girls read. I did not think it proper, at first, that the young lady should have a fancy for two husbands, at the same time, but I will spoil your enjoyment of the story. Read first.

This is now Monday morning, & I am feeling a good deal better, indeed, "all right" would express my state just now. The Dr. has not come yet, & I seem to be losing time. I am sending 2nd of Exchange for the monthly remittance. It is again late but, as I said in my last, that will not matter, as you have the sum to fall back upon.

I was puzzling for some time, about the Judge at Sukkur, who was brother of the Master at Grammar School at Bradford. The name is Ayerst, is it not. I forget now, what happened to the Judge. I think suicide, but am not sure. There was another, a Dy Collector, who did that, and I may be confusing the two.

I have been interrupted here, by an old bore, who comes and asks my advice, about all sorts of professional matters, & he will jaw away, after all my palpable hints that I will say nothing. Generally, I have to almost tell him to go.

You were quite right, in the way that you dealt with that old lady, & the bedstead. Some English women have insolence past understanding.

The interruptions are many, & I cannot hope to write more, so forgive. Don't be alarmed about papers, and say, if you mind the delay caused by my reading them first. Tell about this in your next.

Best love to all, Your own Fred.

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Mandalay, 5 Feb 88

Emmie darling

You will fare badly this time. The English mail is not in yet, which should have arrived here on Thursday last. The steamer was late in Bombay, & missed the Rangoon steamer altogether, & now is supposed to be coming on by the next following. I have been out at Myobingye nearly the whole week, & only came back this morning. This is only just to make a beginning, & my hope is your letter will come in some time soon (today), & then I shall get on better.

This is now evening. Your letter has at last come in, darling, & I am finishing off some official letters, & shall devote a share of the time to you. Alexander has gone out to shoot as usual, & will probably be late for dinner. Last time he reached this at 10.30, so there'll be waiting to be done.

Before anything else, darling, I must tell what I omitted last time. Those Pyjamas & sleeping jackets fit admirably, and any further contributions, in that line, will

be very acceptable. Your last, long looked for, letter, Pet, was dated 1st Jan, and two or three following days. You seem, as you say, to be perfectly overwhelmed with duties and hard work. You are doing too much of the later, darling, tis very evident, & I wish some one would prevail on you to do a little less. I really fear you will wear yourself out and knock up altogether, & then think how worse every thing would be. Until Jeannie & Bessie can really help you, and take a share of the household duties, I think, you had better have a second girl, while the boys are at home, especially. You certainly should take it easy when those b--- t--- are coming on. You worry me very much, in thinking about it, darling, so do try to do as I want.

Now, darling, you must not worry, about my sending the money as usual. I had all along intended to do it, so that you might have a little space to come and go upon, if anything should occur to make remittance late. As long as I can manage to keep sending, without going into debt, tis just as well to send, but I am a little in doubt about the tuition money, & I want your memo. It was put down straight enough, when Binney & Fred were at Haileybury, the amount of extras, & times for sending, I had all down, but now, I must confess to being a little muddled over it all. I sent £30 last week, & that will keep your head above water without distressing me.

You seem to have fallen in pleasant places in Bedford. Being surrounded by more people, for the children to associate with, is a very great gain, and it is what was more especially wanting in your London circumstances.

This is now Monday morning, and I have as usual been out on the work, & spent much more time than I intended, & but little is left for this. When office opens, I shall not have a moment. There was such a big *dâk*, and I know there'll be a lot of answers, from my having been away all last week.

There was a sort of *tamasha* came off last week, catching some elephants in a contrivance they have. They are said to be wild elephants, but it means, I believe, that they have never been broken in, & allowed to run about loose. Their mothers have been turned out, and after a period, the little ones appear, and they are allowed to run about, till big enough to be trained, & then they are caught. The manner is, to send elephants, who have powers of attraction, out among them, & entice them towards the contrivance, where they are surrounded, and driven in to an enclosure, the said enclosure being comprised of very stout posts, wide enough apart to allow a man to get through, but to stop an elephant. They are then driven about, and worried, until they are tired out & exhausted. Then they chain them up etc etc. I did not go to it, thinking it would not be worth the trouble, but I am sorry now that I did not. The Chief Commissioner, Prince & Princess of Orleans (French) and some other swell globe trotters were there, but as you know, I never cared for swells.

The next event is to be the Chief Com. to go up the line officially, & then to march through, by the direction of the unfinished portion, so as to inspect the whole country. He has never shown any interest heretofore, in this work, as far as I could see, & never would take any steps to help us. I am ordered officially to go up, or I think I should avoid the business altogether. Tis getting on to eleven o'clock, darling, and I must do

some office work. I will wind up, Pet, with my love to all, for fear I should not get time for more, but it shall be left open.

Ever your own, Fred.

~~~~~

Mandalay, 12 Feb 88

Emmie darling

Tis Sunday morning, & here I am with nothing to do, & hope little to interrupt me, but this. I don't feel that much will come of it however, as, without anything being the matter with me, I am anything but brilliant in my wits, & feel as if I could not write a word.

I walk about outside till the sweeping was done, and got thinking over things, & very melancholy about it. The only thing, I seem to care for, in the world, just now, is to see you, and that happy flock at home, and the prospect is very dim and distant really. I don't see how it is to be brought about. It will be a year and a half before 3 mths privilege leave will be due to me, & the only chance, of my seeing you, is for you to come out. I can't see my way a bit, but can't get it out of my mind, nor give it up. Just think about it, darling, & without doing anything in the way of a decided step, tell me what you think is practicable. I have a house that you could live in. The cost of passage, of you and the girls, would be considerable, but a good sum would be saved by our living altogether, instead of having, as now, the two establishments. How could you manage for Tom? I have four and a half years more, that I may remain in the service, and must make the most of what savings are possible in that time, to prevent starvation afterwards, but it is not to be thought of, my being banished and compelled to live all alone for that time. This is a wretched place to bring you to, darling, but there seems no help, unless we give up the idea of your coming to me, when I cannot go to you. Just make a sort of calculation of what it would be, the cost of you and the girls coming out, as compared with extra cost of living at home, and providing for Tom's living & education. I am sending you, for living expenses only, on an average Rs 420 a month. If we were all living here together, we could live on less than that, & save what I pay now for living, but there is the cost of the arrangement for Tom, & the cost of the passage money for you three to come out and return to be saved as well, to make it economy. I must go at some figures myself, when I get your memo of what you spend, & how much would be required under the proposal. Mind, darling, don't think anything is settled, but I want to see how it can be done, and what is best.

I am sending the 2nd of exchange for the £30, which has only just come in. I hope you have got the first all right. It appears to have been sent *home* only on the 20 Jan from Calcutta. You will get it about the 15 of this month. It is fortunate you have got a surplus, & won't feel the delay, but I am going to ask what the meaning of it is.

Now, darling, for your letter Jan 11th to 13th inc, on the 8th which is, I think, the quickest I have ever rec. You seemed all to be going on well, darling, with every one happy around you. No fainting fits or Rheumatism to tell of this time, I was so glad to see. You were still unable to sleep, Pet, which is not good, & you really must give up

wearing yourself out. Make those young ladies do something seriously useful to help you. They will not be such good women as you, darling, from having too good a mother. You had a great advantage over them in your young days, in as much as your mother never did all your duties for you, but I think you are an exceptional kind of body, that it would be hard to keep from being a good wife & mother, and good all round, even if you had been spoilt in your youth.

Now! don't tell the children (artists), as I don't believe they warrant what passed through my mind, that those sketches of you were caricatures. I don't want you caricatured. It gives the idea of a want of respect. There! As I said, at first, I don't think they at all meant it. So don't tell them. But don't send me any more of your likeness done in that way. They may caricature & make jokes about any one else, but not about you.

I daresay, by next letter, you will have got into more easy times, when those big boys have away, & there have been a few less parties. You don't say there has been any skating. In one letter, Jeannie said they were preparing for it, & expecting it, but afterwards I heard of nothing but rinking. I have an old-fashioned prejudice in favour of the old style of thing.

This is now Sunday evening. I have had a bathe, & been out to see after some work, & was intending to go to church, but stay at home, for this, in preference.

I have come across Major Clark Kennedy, here, again. Do you remember my telling you, of having met him in the train once, between Poona and Madras. He was then going to Egypt. I don't know quite, whether you ever knew him in Trichy. He was a great friend of the Shakespeares, and then I don't think he was married. He is now, however, & has a grown up daughter, such a fine humdrum girl, a tremendous size. She looks as if she could not have growed [*so*], since that Trichinopoly time. Do you remember the man, & whether he was married. I have seen him in Church, several times since he came here, but did not get speech of him till last Wednesday. I took the Chief Com/ner up over the R'way by train, & there was a big party seeing him off, Kennedy being one, so we greeted each other. I must go and call, I think, if I can manage energy enough. I want to see that young lady near at hand, and take stock of her. Mayhap they are to remain here, as he has only lately come, & I feel ashamed, that I do not know a single lady in Mandalay except Mrs and Miss Crosthwait (Chief Commissioner).

That letter of Binney's to the Proctor, & his mode of dealing with it, was, I fear, very characteristic of him. I used to note occasions, when he did the same sort of thing, but he has not got many bad faults, thank God & we cannot expect that there should be none.

All right about the Pioneer. You will have seen, by a letter a few weeks ago, that I intend to send you another paper, which is much cheaper, & just as good for your purpose. I will write this afternoon to the Manager, and tell him to stop, & pitch into him for dunning you.

Now about Fred. I did not mention the subject last mail, as you said it might all change. I think the Marine Artillery will do for Fred, darling, if he likes the idea. The changes in the Indian Civil are such, as to make it not worth so much, as it was, and the

examination age times, being extended to 23, will make it long drawn out, in the way of expensive education, & that I cannot afford. I am a little mixed, about the scholarship, Fred is to try for. One of your letters made me think, he had tried & failed, but I suppose I read it wrong. I shall hear more, I suppose, presently.

You ask about Parker. He has been making a survey, for a railway from Patialla towards the country where the Indus Valley Ry run through, & from what I have lately heard, I fancy they must be doing something in the way of construction, as engines are being sent to him. I had a letter from sometime last month, but then nothing was settled. He always sends his kind regards to you, darling. Now, I believe my paper is up, with this bill of exchange, so I'll stop.

Love to you, my darling, & all ours. Your own, Fred.

"Memo" seems to mean specifically an account of finances - what bill are due when.

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Mandalay, 18 Feb 88

Emmie darling

I am only making a beginning, without any fixed idea of writing anything. Tis Saturday, & I have Sunday and Monday to write in, but as I intended beginning today, here I am. Thanks for the card, darling. It gave news, I was very glad to hear, Tom's passing his exam well, and Fred repentance.

It's very funny, Fred reminds me so much of my poor brother Tom. He was, taken all round, a much better boy than I, better at his studies, & more free from devilment than I, but when he took an obstinate fit in his head, he stuck to his wickidness, & refused to give in, till every one's patience were utterly exhausted. I knew (my brother) Tom caned for hours, with very short intervals, by my poor Father, because he obstinately refused to take a black draft (salts & senna), and after all was over, & the punishment given up as no good, the medicine was taken. I, though as before said, always much worse than Tom, was never whipped by Father.

It's a funny sort of idea, my writing all this to you, darling. You must have heard me tell it 100s of times but it's just came into my head from the Postcard that is under my eyes now. Your treatment of Fred is a very good one, show him he is wrong & that you are angry with him, and then, leave him to himself. Tis your love for your children, & the way you have made them love you, that gives you the power over them, & has made them the good children they are. I feel very certain, I could not have succeeded as well as you, although I sometimes fancy, there is the faculty in me, of managing men. I can't understand, darling, what it is, that makes you say Fred is so like me. I never could see any likeness in features. There may be something in expression, and, I suppose, there must be in manner, as you say it, but I fancy, the great similitude is in your love for us both. Fred, as you have often said, & so many times lately, must be a pleasing youngster, & I did not know that, that was particularly the case with me, except perhaps in your eyes at a certain epoch.

It is curious to me, but I cannot see any the least likeness to each other, in our children, & cannot recognise, what you & others speak of, there being a likeness to me in any of them to me, except perhaps in Jeannie, & in Tom being like her. Binney is like you in feature, & Fred is something like, & is getting more so (must be that which makes him so pleasing, & take people's hearts by storm). Bessie is like Grandfather Dibblee, & like Kathleen Chandler, Tom, as before said, something like Jeannie. I have been contemplating the family, severally and collectively, whence these reflections.

They have got laboured, at this end. The storekeeper has been receiving orders, & instructions, and making explanation with a very small quantity of intelligence to assist him, & the process has been rather prolonged, and distracting to my literary efforts. It has just struck 12. Alexander is in, & probably hungry, so breakfast must be undertaken. Won't have time for more today, but will make an effort tomorrow.

Tis now 6 p.m., and I am all alone and lonely. It may do me good, to have a talk. I have been loafing about the work, and do not find as many things out of joint, as generally are, and now am back in the *bungla*, which is supposed to be my home. Clark Kennedy and I have got to writing notes to each other, so I shall feel shamed into going to call, I fear, before long. The bouncing young lady, though as tall as I am (very near), and looks as if she could carry me, is believed to be only 17, if so much, & has just come out from school, so the marriage, & the young lady, must be events subsequent to, when I knew Clark Kennedy in Trichy.

There has been no events affecting me, since I last wrote, Pet, except that it has got awfully warm, & that, very suddenly, there has been rain about in the country around us, & the climate seems to have changed. Tis rather seasonable, as my thick suit of clothes, that brown speckled one, bought I think in Poona, has utterly given out, holes in the elbows for some time, holes under the arms, holes in pockets & lastly, holes, big ones, in the sitting down place of the trousers, which got, at last, so bad, that my sense of dignity wouldn't stand it any longer. I sent for a dresser, to bring patterns to make it new ones, but after all the preliminaries, he had discovered that he had no more cloth than the pattern, & the negotiation dropped. I then discovered that the thick grey suit, got also in Poona - you know it, I think, corded sort of stuff - is wearable, many moth holes, but I got mended, and now it looks quite swell. But that now must be discarded, as it is too plenty warm. I think I am very economical in clothes, when away from you, and without ambition to look smart. I have bought only one *Karki* coat & breeches, since I came here, and only two cotton things in Hazaribagh before that, since I left you. You had a way of ordering a suit of clothes for me surreptitiously, & decking me in smart array.

Now for your letter, darling, date 19th Jan. It was nice, Pet, because you seemed to be well, and not so much worked & worried as you had been. I can quite understand, those two men being at home, in addition to the ordinary every day family, making all the difference in your existence, when the maternal perverseness of your disposition leaves you to work too hard, & sacrifice yourself in every possible way for the benefit of others.

There is not much to answer, darling, in your letter. There is a mystery which wants explaining. You say, Fred shoots at cocks and cats, in this yarn, & then further on, but he don't hit or kill them. Question naturally arises - What does he shoot with?

I am so glad to hear about Jeannie being so well. That is a great score which you made, by the move to Bedford, getting out of that Climate for Jeannie & Bessie and Tom. I often thought they would be better out of it & then additional amusement and occupation in small society way will be a great benefit to them all. But don't forget, darling, that you must make Jeannie get into the way, of helping you in household matters. It will be the greatest possible benefit to her, to learn how to do things. She is not likely to be anything more than a poor lady in her life, & the more she learns in her young days, to help in a household, and to make the best of poor circumstances, the better she will be off. I never expect her to be quite a good a woman as her mother, but she has capabilities, that will help to make her happy in being useful, if cultivated.

There are - I was stopped here, darling, by the arrival of two military friends of Alexander's and Wadley, the young assistant engineer on the next Division, who (as you know by this time, I think) entertains the sporting community of the line, & neighbourhood.

This is now Sunday evening. I have been feeling feverish and seedy all day, & not bright enough to write anything worth sending, but it is better to finish, I think, before tomorrow, as probably there will be such a pile of work, that I shall not have time for a line, & further I may have to go out the line. A pile of official letters has come in this evening, & I have had my brains further muddled, so that it seems impossible to produce an idea.

The two youngsters, Wadley & Alexander, have been off somewhere with friends. They left a few minutes before breakfast, without a word, & I, knowing their tricks and their manners, took breakfast without them. It seems the fashion, with youth of the present day, to do all things in that casual sort of fashion.

This is now Monday afternoon, and I have been busy with work all day, without a pause, & am now leaving for Myobingye, so forgive, darling.

Love to yourself, darling, and to all our flock. Your own, Fred.

*Fred is searching out family likenesses. He mentions his brother Tom, his sister Kathleen Chandler, and "Grandfather Dibblee", who is his father.*

*"Those two men" - the oldest boys, Binney and Fred (junior)*

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This letter was written by Fred to Emmie – date early March 1888

sheet/s missing

... darling, for your letter, Feb 1st. It was a nice one, as you seemed to have got over your troubles, and only speak of one you forgot to mention before, the bilious attack, after Xmas festivities, Turkey & Plum pudding.

With regard to Owen & his children, he has not asked for your address, so it is evident, as I thought possible, he does not care much, about them cultivating you, nor, as

he did not give the address with much enthusiasm, nor tell me any of their circumstances, do I think he was anxious for you to go and see them. Ever since that time, he has never once asked, whether I had good news of you, nor mentioned the news he had of his children. I like Owen very much, but tis not worth while pursuing the cultivation of the children.

As I said, Molesworth is coming up with Buyers, & to be here by the middle of the month. I am glad he is coming in, as there are a lot of things to settle about the Bridge, and which I want Molesworth to know about. Buyers is so unsatisfactory, knows nothing about the work, & won't ever say he will leave it to me, but keeps on humbugging, and putting off whenever I ask him a question. M can not be relied on to do me any personal good, but he will do the work good, & I may benefit that way. I have given up hope, pretty much, of any good coming to me however, and about the only thing, I could look forward to, with any pleasure, is the chance of getting to you, darling. Oh dear! Oh dear! How I long for it.

The newspapers are writing a good deal, about the rapid progress of the work. It is not quite true, that there has been rapid progress, and the line cannot be opened by the time it was expected, but there has been no fault on part of the Engineers of the line. Rails, and everything else that was wanted, have run short, and not been up to time. I have been ready for a long time, in everything but the big Bridge and the Stations. As far as the last go, they have not sent me the plans of the principal buildings of it, and I have had to wait for everything that was required for the Bridge.

Now, darling, about poor Willie's case. It is so sad, & I know how you would feel it, Pet. It will be an undertaking for you, darling, to go to Paris, but if you have your cousin Ellen, you will be able to get on all right. I think I should not like your going alone, and I shall be glad to hear you have got back all right, Pet. You have done an awful lot of travelling, and knocking about alone, I know, darling, but those changes, from train to steamer, & steamer to train, & those stations in Paris, are so bewildering. You were quite right, darling, to decide to go, if he wants, so much, to see you, and I do hope so, that he will get better. You know, I never met Polixeny, & cannot form an idea, whether she would exaggerate about such a matter, but it must be very serious, from having gone on so long, and then having kept it so quiet. I think, it would have been wrong to kept it back from Irvin, so in my opinion you did wisely to write and tell him. I think you generally are right in what you do, you clear-headed darling.

What is that about a health certificate for Fred? I suppose, from what you write, that a health cert. is necessary, whenever they return after the holidays, but I don't think I ever heard that it was. Congratulate him, for me, about being able to carry that stick. It must be a great comfort to him. I am sincerely glad, though, to know he has his heart's desire, & has been made a prefect. I quite believe with you that encouragement with Fred is the way to get the best work out of him. Tis a mistake, especially with some boys, always reiterating that he was not doing as well as he might, & I think they are rather fond of doing that at Haileybury. I don't quite understand about that gold medal, & Fred's failing at it. A Cheltenham boy, you say, got it. Who gave the medal? I thought it was

given by Haileybury, but that cannot be, or the Cheltenham boy could not have competed. Then again, what is this "honourable mention" you speak of, and why did Fred omit the viva voce exam part, if that would have helped him? I am curious about it, never having got a full connected story.

Tell Tom, I was pleased at hearing of his surplice, & that he can sing well enough to join the Choir. I sang in a Choir, when I was his age, but never was honoured by wearing a surplice.

Give my kindest regards to Mrs Clarke & to Mr Clarke, if you think it worthwhile. It is so nice to have good neighbours for you, dear.

Thank Jeannie, for the account of the Marine Artillery. It was very nice and clear, & I hope, now that Fred likes the idea, he will work away with a will, so as to enable him to pass. I think there ought not to be any difficulty about it. It should be within his powers.

Don't forget, darling, to let me have in a concise form, all the sums I have to send, & on what dates. I am not quite clear, although you have, from time to time told me, all about Binney & Fred's. I can find out, but if you would just write down, when Fred fees, when Binney payt, and payt for Tom, in each case, become due, I will see that they get them. I am sending £30 monthly, so that you can keep well ahead, with what you have got, until it is all straightened up, and having none but the £30 to pay will enable me to accumulate a little.

I find I must stop now, darling. Alexander has come in. It is dinner time, & I must write the note to Mrs Buyers before I eat. I don't think there'll be time for a word tomorrow morn.

Love to all, Your own Fred

Monday morning, just time for a word more. Am driven out of all intelligence, had to hire a cook, pay off old one, & do a lot of business & get off.

Willie is Emily's brother and Polexeny is his wife. At this point, Willie is seriously ill. He lived in Greece, so I don't understand the reference to Paris. Possibly Emmie would have to change at Paris to get to Greece. Irvin is Emily's other brother, living in Canada. Fred (junior) has a stick as symbol of office as a prefect.

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Mandalay, 10 Mar 88

Emmie darling

You are going to fare worse this time, than has happened to you for ever so long. Molesworth and Buyers are here, and have been loafing about all day long. Indeed, in the morning they took me away loafing, when I might have been at this. It is now in the afternoon, and I have been very busy, in the hope that I should have some leisure towards

evening, with Buyers loafing away elsewhere, but here he is, back again, & probably he may want to go somewhere with me, this evening. Tourism there is projected.

I was interrupted here, beyond all possibility of evasion, & it is now 5pm on Sunday afternoon, and the house is full. The thing projected was a steamer, but in our steamer, the big bell and the cracked Pagoda, and it came off. I wanted to take Molesworth there, and we had a very pleasant time of it, & got back before one, but since then, I have been busy as possible, with *dâk*, letters, and listening to Molesworth and Buyers jawing away. In addition to that, an Examiner has come in, & quartered himself on me. It is now 7.30 pm, and I have not had a moment spare, but I hope, darling, to write tomorrow morning.

This is now tomorrow morning, and I have got all the people away but the Examiner, who bothers me, by coming in from the next room, to ask if I had heard some joke, old to me, but at which he laughed immoderately. Tis difficult to sort out ideas, so as to write intelligibly. I won't be rid of the troublesome ones, till this evening, when Buyers and Molesworth go away.

I shall have to go out for a time, to look after some work soon, so you will not have anything like a decent letter. You will forgive, I hope. We are at an epoch of our work, at the Bridge, all the well sinking is finished, and we have to go on to the next stage, putting up the Guides. Molesworth says we have got on very well, but it is not so. We are two months behind what we might have been. However he knows all about it, and has upset Buyers obstructiveness to my proposals for the time being. Long ago, I proposed to Buyers to do away with well curbs which were on the bottom of the Cylinders & was told that the Engineer in Chief did not approve of doing away with the well curbs. Now Molesworth says it is such a pity those well curbs were used. I never saw Buyers' equal for an ass. You must be rather tired of hearing of Buyers being an ass, however.

Now about your letter, darling. It was the 6th Feby. There is not much to answer in it, but it was a nice one, darling, as you, beyond having some aches in the first part, seem jolly & well. Binney did better than you expected of him. He wrote a letter himself and sent Mr Ash's enclosed in it. I like the letter. It is a very sensible letter, & shows he was taking an interest in Fred. The great point, of course, is that, after choosing something he wishes as a calling (at any rate, which he has no dislike to), it is an object, that every penny in cost of his education, and every week saved, in his being able to provide for himself, an object to us, & will better our chance of being able to exist hereafter. I only hope that Fred will pass on his first trial. You must tell Binney, I was very pleased to get his letter, but am too pressed with work to write him direct this time. I had intended to, but for all these people coming.

That is news - Will Robinson being ordered off to Sierra Leone. His Father was often there but it is not supposed to be a nice place. I fancy they don't keep R.E's there long, so Will need not fear being domiciled there. It will do him good, I think, knocking about a little. His time of life is much the best for seeing the world, if he can only manage to get it over before getting too old.

Young Stewart's death was not exactly due to the Burmans or dacoits, such as we have around us. He was on a boundary exploration, and some hill men (who were not Burmans) came down, and polished them off, just by way of practice.

I was interrupted here to put some lamps in order, which refused to burn, & then there was a lot of talk from the Examiner & Newham, part business & part gossip, & now tis half past eleven, near breakfast time, & if I admit any clerk or man on business work, my day is done, my day is done. I shall never have the chance, of writing a word again, before mail goes. There is a lot of things to settle with Buyers, & I have the strongest objection to doing those things.

Now I must write, lots of love to all, in case I cannot write more - ever your own, Fred.

*Will Robinson is Fred's nephew.*

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Mandalay, 18 Mar 88

Emmie darling

You had a narrow escape of a very bad letter this time, worse even than the last. If I had to write yesterday or day before, the result would have been something, or I should say, nothing. I was feeling very bad, fever & above all, indigestion beyond expression. I absolutely could not swallow food, & Rheumatism, but the Dr has comforted me, by saying it was just the same thing as before, intensified by a cold that touched up my liver. I have got over it now, & this morning feel quite myself again.

I think I must have told you, darling, that my garden turned out a complete failure, did I not? The soil seemed incapable of growing things entirely. Tis black cotton soil, and wants an admixture of the earth, besides much manipulation. The seeds came up, some of them, and grew to an inch high or so, then they slowly and silently faded away, like the Snark. The water too was a difficulty, that would have cost much to overcome. Every bit of it would have to be drawn from wells, 35 feet deep from ground to water level. I gave up the garden therefore, & took all the plants I had started, out to Newham's, where they flourished very well, as he has very good soil, & water at hand. Indeed, it did me more good to have the garden out there, as I spend most of my time there, & I would not have got much amusement out of it here.

There is one thing I have succeeded in, better than the others, & that is Water Cress. I have a splendid bed of it, having made a cistern where my bath water runs out, & it has grown as thick as a bed of moss in a Canadian wood. Now today, I am having a job of enlarging it, & shall get regular crops off it. A week ago, I cut as much as a big soup plate would hold. Now tis just as thick as ever. When I get this new place, which is three times the space of the original, there will be a fine crop.

I have had interruptions, in the shape of a Chinaman walking into my room - bedroom - with bundles of soap stone figures (like those I sent home). I have been tempted once or twice, by this worthy Chinaman consenting to take half what he originally asked. That is a very shallow dodge, I confess, & probably does not result in

much loss, but I have got some very quaint figures very cheap, as compared with anything in my experience, & I shall make up a box some day.

Alexander is engaged in traffic with a woman selling him silks & embroidery. He has already bought a lot of things that are very queer, but to my mind, quite useless in an English house, & now today, the same woman has come back again, which I think indicates that he did not make such good bargains as he thought he had. I am leaving the silk transaction entirely to Alexander, but you should see our drawing room. There is a piece of embroidery that would cover one of the walls of Spring Villa, Castle Road, I would bet, hanging over and around our drawing table. Our plan rack is covered with silk garments that Burmese ladies wear, another plan rack, with men's garments (there is nothing distinctive in them, as in our garments, both being a sort of petticoat) and the other table, in the room, is covered with various embroidery. You would have been amused at the performance. Alexander & I were talking, when the woman walked, deposited the parcels on the floor, & proceeded, without a word of permission or otherwise, to ornament the room in the manner I described. I left Alexander to her persuasion, but find now, she has gone, without having made any thing out of him. So much enterprise deserved something better than that. She must have had merchandise worth £200 with her, & came in a *gharri*.

No particular incident has occurred in my part of the Country, but Owen's people have been pretty lively. There have been three *dacoities* among his people (work people), & the last was a serious one, at a Bridge, where Indian Masons were congregated, & had money with them. The dacoits came, murdered two of them, cut up a third badly, & got off with some loot, but missed the bulk of the money. It is feared that the Indian Masons won't like it, and that they will leave. I should. Chinamen don't seem to mind being killed much. They have been brought up to it, & the only effect is to ask more wages, but Indians, I should think, would have no taste for that sort of thing.

They are getting on famously with the Water Cress bed but are a little troublesome, in making inferences and assertions that it is ready, & all quite cleared for the concrete. However, I have got them in the right way now.

Now, darling, about your letter 16th etc of Feb. I am sorry for your disappointment, in not getting a letter from me, Pet, but by this time, it has been all made clear to you, I expect, & you have got two in one week. I did not fail to write, Pet, & there has been no mishaps (as far as I know) about posting it. I will look up in my diary, and see where I was, in the mail day it left here, but the only way I can see, for accounting for it, is the Post Office. I have not found it carefully put away, to write something more in, as did happen once, I know.

Pet, here I am, at Post time, without having had time to write one word all day long, & have now finished up with my A/cs, & have two minutes only to close this.

All my love, darling, ever, your own, Fred.

I am sending the paper as usual, but you must read it before the Girls see it. There are some things they ought not to read. I intended to manipulate it but no time. Fred

The quote from the Hunting of the Snark (by Lewis Carroll) is garbled. In the poem, it is the Baker who "softly and suddenly vanished away" because he saw a Snark, who turned out to be a Boojum. (This makes more sense if you read the poem. Perhaps.)

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Mandalay, 30 Mar 88

Emmie darling

This is Friday, and an unusually early day for me to commence, but the fact is, I contemplate a mild outing for Sunday and Monday, & have promised to go, conditionally, on my being able to finish my home letters which, as you know, Pet, is generally done on Sunday & Monday morning. Now this is Good Friday, a holiday, & office is closed, so I ought to be able to manage, & I came in from Myobingye early, so as to have this chance.

The outing which I have in contemplation is to go over Owen's division, & see his work now, before he goes away & leaves it. As a dissipation, tis very mild, & indeed it is scarcely worth the trouble, in fact. The truth is, I believe, Owen is unhappy, because he has so little chance of showing us hospitality. He comes down here, and stops a day or perhaps two, 6 times to my once going up there, & he feels unhappy. He likes to have people go and see him, but he is much out of the way.

Did I tell you in my last, that the sinking of wells in the Bridge is finished, and so much of our anxiety is over. There are lots of things that delay us, however, & the progress is not as good as I had hoped it would be, but it will be all right in the end, I dare say. I have had my ideas adopted in one particular point, by having Molesworth on the spot. It was quite pittifull, to see the way Molesworth fell in with my ideas, and ignored Buyers. What I suggested, was carried out, & Buyers sat mute as a mole.

I have had lots of things by this mail, darling, for which to thank you. First, the Weekly Times - it does better than the "News of the World", & you won't mind the extra penny, will you, Pet? Then there was Chambers & the Oxford, for which thank Binney. The diagram about the Torpids boat races was a capital idea. I have not had time to do more than skim through it yet.

I am a little curious to hear how you like the new paper. It is sometimes very good indeed, & the jokes are not half as "thin" as newspaper jokes generally are, but some of the stories are a little too broad, for my taste, as reading for our girls. I was remarking the other day, that you would not see such things, in a Canadian or American paper or publication, as English people publish without a blush. However, I must trust you, to look out for any very bad parts, and cut them out before the girls have this paper to read. There are generally "continued stories" in them, so that it would not do to keep back this paper from you, but you must let the girls suffer on that a/c.

Besides the letter, papers etc that came from you, (you would scarcely believe it) a long letter from Grace and another from Sophie, very nice of them indeed. Give them my love, & tell them, how much I was pleased at hearing from them. I am going to try to write, but may miss it this time, so you must acknowledge the letters for me. Grace also

sent an Easter Card, and Photograph of her two boys, Percy & Willie. It was Percy (was it not?) that I used to think Tom was like.

This is now afternoon. I have had some work to do, but not much, & have only to sign my name a few times more before tonight's mail, & so I should be able to make some progress with this. It is not the mail that will take this letter, Pet, which goes Monday night, but as I said before, on Monday I shall be off sky larking.

Now for your letter, darling. Poor old Pet, you were overwhelmed with troubles, bad news from Willie, Fred being in sick house, Tom in scrape, and you further worried by some selfish moaning in one of my letters. Oh dear, I am a selfish old beast, not to keep my grumbling to myself. I do get low spirited, very bad at times, but I should not afflict you with them. It is not as though you could comfort me, and probably the difficulty would all be over, before my moaning reached you.

Now, about Willie. I am so sorry and grieved, about it all, but it is quite out of the question, your going there to him. These things, darling, we can not control, & must just accept. I am puzzled to know, what sort of disease it is. There surely is some specific name for it. The particular weakness of constitution, which he has shown since his boyhood, probably is the reason, for his not being able to rally, & throw off the disease, whatever it may be. Your poor Mother, no doubt, would feel a shock like that news of Willie, but I understand, she was showing want of strength before, and at her age, she would not be able to bear much extra strain.

I was glad to know, that Fred was all right again. Poor chap, it is hard being shut up in that Hospital sort of place, without anyone to cheer him up, but youthful ailments have a great deal of elasticity behind them. His having Mr and Mrs Ash, & Mr Milford to see him, & know that you would go if necessary, & have books to read, instead of his studies, would prevent utter misery.

Now, darling, about your *bandobast* for coming out. Did I ever write to you anything about some such arrangement, having Bessie over etc? I have had it in my mind, very often, & intended asking you to sound them in Canada and the thought of your being with me makes me fairly jump (inside). You know what I mean, darling, but, darling, it wants thinking out, before being finally settled, and any thing you do, you must be careful not to commit yourself, beyond power of withdrawal. The difficulty, of course, is my being able to afford to carry it out. The Establishment at at home under Sister Bessy would cost just as much as at present, we, living together, would not cost much more than my living alone, probably, except perhaps the cost of a horse and trap, but the living, and trap, is quite double, & more, than ever it was in any part of India, Pet, and whilst that continues to be in Burmah, I could not save money enough for your passage out, darling, that is without economizing in some item.

I hope to finish the Bridge by the time the hot weather is over, and the supposition is, they won't want me here after that, & perhaps I might be transferred to India. It is hard to speculate, without some sort of certainty to start with, but the probabilities or possibilities are in the direction of what I say. My 3 month privilege leave will be due to me, in a little more than a year, and I intend to save every day of that, to take me home when the time

comes, if the arrangement for your coming out won't work. By the way, if Fred succeeds, & is provided for after Oct, there will be an item of saving there, that might help us out, Pet. You could not think of a start before then, when the cold weather is coming on, so we have time to see, & even to talk & reply to each other, many times before then, but there will be no harm in trying to bring it about, beyond the disappointment to me if it fails. "Dinner ready on table sar", so I will stop till tomorrow.

Saturday morning, & I must finish and on this sheet of paper. I have just again read that part of your letter, darling, & find I did not quite grasp it (I had read the whole twice over to start with), but what mystified me was mixing up the two Bessies. You put down the saving from not bringing our Bessie out to India, which I just took as the expense of Sister Bessie coming to England. It is more clear to me now, Pet, but as I said before, we must see where the saving is to be effected, so that I can afford it. The frightful cost of living in a respectable way in Burmah, whilst we still have the home to keep up in Bedford, the taking your money for passage, which ought to be invested, when I cannot see the way to replace it by my savings, are the points against the arrangement. If I could get this Bridge finished, get a transfer to India, & to a decent station for you and Jeannie to live in, we could work the thing out to a conclusion. Could you not make a calculation to be put down, & added up what the cost of the Bedford Establishment would be, with Sister Bessie in charge of Our Bessie & Tom, what Binney's payt would amount to in the year, and add all the expenses from every source that might be expected. I would like, very much, to give Sister Bessie a home, if it could be managed, but do tell me, darling, did I, or did I not, mention this in any of my letters? It will be funny, if we both thought about it at the same time, and our letters have crossed each other.

In the B letter from Sophy & Grace, they are loud in their praises of our Flock, & quote Will Robinson's opinion. No doubt their opinion is mainly formed on what he writes. One thing he appears to reintegrate, they are all such Ladies and gentlemen. Another (by the way, they would know it of themselves) that Jeannie writes such a pretty hand, and such a nice letter. Don't forget to send my love to Sophie and to Grace, and thank them for their letters. I will make an attempt to write to them, but it would be a vain thing this time, with two writing days taken out for sky larking.

Now, darling, with love to all, especially yourself, my Pet, ever your own, Fred

*"Fred being in sick house" – He is at school. Mr Ash and Mr Milford are teachers there. Torpids is an Oxford boat race, with esoteric rules!*

*Grace and Sophie are Fred's sisters in Canada. Will Robinson is Sophie's son.*

*Bessie is another sister. Fred's daughter is also called Bessie. There is a certain amount of confusion between the two in this letter. Emmie is suggesting that "Sister Bessie" comes and lives in Bedford, to look after Tom and young Bessie, the two youngest children (who might be more vulnerable to illness in India), while Emmie and Jeannie come out to live with Fred.*

*"Sar" is sir. Fred is quoting his servant announcing a meal.*

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Myobingye, 14 April

Emmie darling

You won't get much of a letter this time. I am all upset, & I don't know whether it is sheer good luck or not. My division is to be closed, and I am to hand over at the end of the month. Just 16 days more. I am very glad, if it is to result in my getting away from Burmah for good, and getting rid of Buyers, but that, as yet, is all uncertainty. A. seems to have suddenly taken up the idea, got the G.R. consent to it, & went through the whole business with[*out*] having said a word to me about it. The last time I saw him, he promised to make arrangements, that showed, he had no intention of anything of the kind. I have written, officially, to know where I am to be sent to, & think of telegraphing. It is the uncertainty, that bothers and upsets me. The business may turn out all well for me, but the uncertainty, as to where I am going, is very upsetting. I really feel as if I had not a word that I could write. Your next letter, Pet, had better be sent to Post Office Rangoon. That will save 6 days delay in my getting it, no matter where I go. I expect to see Owen this evening, and we will confer together, but I don't suppose I will learn anything that will be information for you in this matter, but I may learn something more, before this has to be posted.

It is now Sunday morning. Owen is here, and we have had a mutual grumble. He could not give me any news. In fact, he had not heard as much as I had. I will telegraph this evening, when I get to Mandalay, & see if any thing is settled. Owen prophesies that one man can't do the work of the two divisions. There is more than one can do well, on his division alone. On one thing we have pretty well settled, that it is a good thing my getting away, if it does end in that, and I think it is pretty certain. You can understand, darling, my being upset, and not able to write a decent letter, when there is this uncertainty. We did think, Owen and I would be going away by the same steamer, but that seems a little doubtful.

I am going in to Mandalay this evening. A Rangoon Man, the Traffic Superintendent, is staying at the bungalow. Being a R'way man, I thought it right to be civil to him, besides that, he helped me when I first came up. They are going to open a part of the line, at the southern end, at the first of next month, or some time about then, and the traffic man is up taking notes.

We nearly had an event, yesterday, to write about. The whole settlement was very nearly burnt down. We were loafing about in the evening, when I noticed a smoke in the direction of this *bungalow*, & I proposed to the others to go and see. It proved to be a lot of leaves & brushwood & rubbish, that had been thrown down this bank of the river. It caught fire somehow. There was a lot of that very tall grass - you know, the stuff that used to grow on the Indus. Fortunately there was no wind, not a breath & it was just burning away steadily, and nearly caught the grass, when we succeeded in putting it out. Today the wind is blowing half a gale, and if the fire had made a start today, instead of yesterday, there would be very short work. The wind got up in the middle of the night, & blew up a blaze, but I had taken the precaution, to order the sentry to watch it, so we got

it out before harm came. Today I have ordered all the stuff to be cleared away, and thrown into the river, so it will be safe from danger of fire.

Last week, all the R'way buildings, that is, the buildings that were being put up for the station and the temporary quarters at the station at Kyauksai, were all burnt down. Half the town was burnt down too, all our subordinates were burnt out, and lost everything they possessed, except the clothes they stood up in. Kyauksai, you know, Pet, is where Owen lived, and is the head & heart of his Division. Fortunately, Owen himself was some little distance away, & he escaped. The Post Offices Govt. telegraphs offices treasury & Police house were all burnt. In the treasury were 2 *lakhs* of Rupees, & it was all melted into one lump. It was in cash chests.

This is now Monday morning, and the last time of writing. I am down at Mandalay, and don't feel very jolly, bad indigestion. You know how I get, when things are uncertain, and I have a move before me. A mail has come in, without a single line to tell what is to be my destination, or what my movements are to be, & until I hear, of course I can do nothing. I have not much to sell, a table or two, and some bathroom furniture, I think, is about all. My enamelware, plates and dishes are pretty well worn out, tumblers all broken but one, so there won't be much difficulty in settling that part of the business. At the same time, I can do nothing til I hear when I am to go. I will telegraph today, and see if I cannot extract some information from them. I had a long talk with Owen, and have come to the conclusion, that if I can only get away from Burma as the result of this move, & get rid of Buyers, it will be the best thing that could happen to me.

What a sell it would have been, darling, if we had decided on your coming out. My heart would have been set on it, & it would have been the thing I should look forward to, and if our arrangements were upset in this sudden sort of fashion, it would have been too much for me. Now, Pet, we must simply look forward to my being settled somewhere else, let us hope a better place than this, and then think of our arrangements. Meanwhile, you may be sure, that I won't make the mistake, I did when leaving Harazibagh, of taking privilege leave, & wasting it going about the country. If I had only saved that month, I should have been able to go home next August. Oh dear! Oh dear! I must try and keep myself together, darling. How I wish you could be here to comfort me. That is rather a selfish sort of wish however, & you would probably work & worry yourself half to death.

All this time, Pet, I have said nothing about your letter, being so full of this business. Poor Willie. I feel for you so much, darling. I also, you know, Pet, was so fond of him. There was something so mysterious in his symptoms, darling, that I feared it might be a breaking up. 'Tis a comfort to know, Polexeny was so devoted to him. A wife is, or should be, the comfort a man wants when such a time comes.

I have no more room now. I am sending the 2nd of Exchange, still thinking it better to do so. I cannot have more paper than this sheet. Thank Binney for his letter to me. I can't write this time, when I am so upset.

The "Killaloe" is a great success. I lent it to an artist amateure, and he performed it at a concert, with with great applause, & he was encored. It fetched *Tommy Atkins* immensely.

I find, by weighing this, I can put in another half sheet. Interruptions are beginning, however, & it's sorry stuff that I can write now. A new driver has come, & I have had to make every one bustle about, to get the train started.

Stop here to write a telegram, & tis near 10, when I expect to be overwhelmed. The Traffic Superintendent Man is here, & I am putting him up. Making friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness principal, that when I go to Rangoon, some of them may receive me into their houses. However Mrs Buyers has asked me to go down and stay, in an indefinite sort of way, when I was entertaining them here, but I think, I would prefer being asked by someone else, so as to be able to decline Buyers' invitations. My guest has just come in & interrupted me, so I may as well stop definitely. I should not have any moment to go to this again.

Love to all, darling, especially to your own dear self. Ever your own, Fred. I sometimes feel in quite good spirits, then I pull myself up again by the uncertainty of it all.

Willie, or William Pryor Binney, is Emmie's brother of Emily, and Polixeny is his wife. Willie died on 13th March 1888.

I don't know who (or what) is "A" or "G.R".

"Killaloe" is a popular march in the Irish Regiments of the British Army, written in 1887.

Luke 16.9: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

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Myobingye, 26 April 88

Emmie darling

I have got into a chronic, don't care, frame of mind, all right in health, but don't feel at all in exuberant spirits. The uncertainty, as to when I am going, is just the same as before, excepting that I hear, that the Government of India was asked for news, & nobody knows what or wherefore. It seems to increase my chances, or the probabilities, of my getting out of this country. So far, so good. This morning, I saw the man Salmond, who is going to take over charge from me. He says he is not in a hurry, & can spend any time he likes, in taking over Owen's division, & it will be 10 days, and as much more, as I may wish. Now this just suits me, as I want to know, definitely, where I am to go, before leaving Mandalay, & as soon as I do know, then I want to start soon as possible. Salmond seems quite an old fellow, nearly as old as myself, white hair & beard, but only an Executive Engineer 3rd grade temporary. Indeed, he is 46, but it seems strange that he should occupy the position of a man of 20/30. He looks clean. They say he is very good tempered, lets Buyers bully him with complacency, but is not much of an Engineer. However, it's all right if I can manage to get out of this country.

Owen has been ill, oh so ill, within an ace of dying. He was brought into Mandalay, Monday morning, with scarcely life in him, fever with choleraic-like symptoms. The Apothecary had entirely mistaken the case, & was treating him wrongly, & I believe, a day longer would have been the death of him. I have put him in a set of

driver's quarters, near my house in Mandalay, & I see him every morning & evening, & lend him what he wants, & consult the Dr so as to see his people carry out orders. So I hope I am doing some good. He has improved a little, that is, the bad symptoms have abated, but he is so weak. He always was thin & lean, but now one can almost see through him.

I had to stop here, as Newham began to eat up the breakfast. 'Tis 2 P.M., and I must get on with this. Tomorrow will probably be a busy day with office work. I am going in, in the morning, and there will be Owen to look after.

There was another event in the past week. The guard of my train was at his work on Monday, and went out for a ride on a pony in the evening, was taken ill, & died of cholera 4 A.M. next day, as suddenly as poor little Miss Adam. Do you remember, darling? What a foolish thing to write, of course you remember. But it was such a sudden thing. There was a lot of things to look after about the poor young man, & now I am troubled. I can find out nothing about his friends or relatives. He was, I think, an Irishman born, about 26 years old, had come from Australia. He had been employed as a guard on the open line, & I have sent to have inquiry made, but the probability is, I shall have to write to some one myself. I have sent an announcement to the newspaper (Pioneer) with "Australian papers please copy".

This arrangement spoken of above, darling, of taking long to hand over, will be a good thing for me, as regards your letters, Pet. I will get the Parcel all right, and, as I wrote two mails ago about the move to you, there will only be two of your letters wandering about and delayed. You will hear early or by the middle of May, & I can stop your letters at Rangoon early or by the middle of June, so that will be a good job. I think, as soon as it is settled, that I am to go to India, I will get you to write to Post Office Bombay (not yet, Pet) and that will give me letters with only a day's delay.

I was interrupted here, by a lot of telegrams which have taken some time to answer, & I am out of the groove.

Whom do you suppose I saw the other day? Barry Baxter - he walked into the *bungalow* one morning early. They have sent him over here, to join the Provincial Branch, just at the time they are wanting men sent back. I can't understand it. I am glad however that they did not decide to keep me here, & that they really will send me back.

I had a letter from Whitlock from Pontefract, asking me to do something for his boy George. Was that not the youngster who was at Madras, and about the age of Binney? The letter was the same sort of crazy epistle that he used to write, and of which you have seen many.

All this time, I am not forgetting your letter, darling, but keeping it, till I have any more events polished off. Now for it. Mar 28th, it was such a nice pleasant letter, & I liked to hear of the sons & daughters (I suppose that is the only expression that would be accepted) of their sayings and doings. Your description, of Fred at Haileybury, reminds me so much of my brother Tom at Fred's age. He, at college, was always taking liberties, & saying cheeky things to his seniors, but never gave offence by it, & was always a favorite. That Dipheria business ...

*[sheet/s missing]*

... also Aunt Emma (Bedell), a sister of my mothers. There were four Wetmore uncles - George, Charles, Robert and Thomas. There is Family history for you, and there is no room for any more cousins, be their name what it may. There is just one thing more. I don't quite know where it is, he says his mother is still living. Your word looks like New Brunswick, & if he says that, he is an imposter in my belief. But if I read your word wrong, the case is better. I believe, it to be quite impossible of a widow of the name Dibblee to have been living in New Brunswick, that I never heard of. That must be put right, before I accept him as even a second cousin. Bessie, however, is the better authority, and I daresay she will give you lots of news. Make Jeannie write out the list of uncles and aunts as a protection in future.

I am glad you liked the paper, Pet. The Yankee stories are most of them very good, & would suit Fred to perfection, from what you say, but take care about the girls. In the last, you will see I cut some out. It would not do.

This is now Monday morning, and I have wiggled away, to have a little quiet, and finish this. Such a change in the weather, lately. There has been rain, all around us, and on the hills to the east, & we are now in a totally different climate, from the middle of last week. I am glad on Owen's account. He felt the heat awfully. The Dr says he is much better. Last night he sat up in a long chair, the first time since he was brought in, last Monday.

There are a lot of things, I believe, that I want to say, but they have fled. Tell me about Fred's scholarship. I suppose that will be all off, if he leaves Haileybury in June.

About Willie's property. I don't quite know how the law is in England, but I believe, my signature would be necessary to any transfer of property that came to you, after you married me. However, that may be, darling. I will agree to whatever you may wish. If there is no will found, his wife would be only able to claim a life interest in 1/3 his personal estate, in a legal point of view, & I think his estate would be dealt with under English law, being a British Consol. He would, in no way, be considered naturalised, or in any respect, other than a British subject. It is impossible to say, darling, what property would be likely to be left. From what you have written, I should say ...

*Subsequent sheet/s are missing.*

*Someone has turned up, called Dibblee, and claiming to be a relative. Fred is running through some family history to check this. Bessie is Fred's sister, and would know all the family ramifications.*

*Willie, Emmie's brother, has just died. He was H.M. Consul at Syra, Greece, but still "British" (actually Canadian), so his probate would be under British law.*

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Mandalay, 11 May

Emmie darling

You won't get much of a letter this time. I am feeling very seedy & low spirited, in digestion & bottom. I can hear nothing about my transfer, & suppose it will end, in

kicking my heels about Rangoon, for an indefinite period. Tis now nearly (quite) a month, since the amalgamation of the Division was decided upon, & nothing definite is known about me yet, nor has the man, who is to take over, got through with his other work, so as to be ready. I don't know what to do in the way of packing up. I have started at my guns this morning. I take them with me in any case. The few tables & chairs which I possess, Alexander will, I believe, take, and there are the knives & forks & spoons, which I will take with me. Even after I have handed over, there will be plenty of time, having 6 days preparation, & as it does not come out of my leave, or anything of that kind, I may as well take the 6 days, but it's all very bothering. I feel, as I have to go, I should like to be off. I no longer feel any interest in the work, and there being no arrangements, there is very little enjoyment in the present style of existence.

As I said, I take no interest in the work, but, notwithstanding, there is sometimes a good deal to do, & that of a troublesome, unsatisfactory kind. Our subordinate, the Bridge foreman, has burst out as to be unsubordinate against Newham's orders, & has been so insolent, that he has had to be suspended, & now sacked. It is very troublesome, & will bother the Executor, who comes again after, tremendously. They won't feel glad at my going, I bet, & it would have been better to have things so smoothly, & let me get away without bother. I hate to have smashed a man.

All this is not very interesting or enjoyable, as a letter for you, darling, but it does me good to talk to someone. Oh, if I had you to talk to, darling, it would be such a comfort now.

Buyers came up the line, through from Rangoon, & came within a few miles of me, then turned round and went back. The heat has been something dreadful, & that may have been the cause of it, & then heavy rain may be expected. That would make parts of the line impassable. I was not longing to see him, particularly, but I might have got some information out of him, that would have enabled me to see my way a little better.

Now, darling, about your letter. You have been having lots of work & trouble, darling, but somehow it was a good letter, and comforted me when I was feeling very seedy. I wish, Pet, I could be near, & talk with you about poor Willie. It must be a dreadful grief, darling, & the circumstances were very sad, his having that incurable disease, & their not telling him. I suppose no one knew, what state his matters were in, regarding his will & wishes, or they would have acted more wisely. In one of my other letters I wrote (did I not) that there must have been some disease of the brain. Poor Polexeny will recover in time. Those poor things, who become thoroughly prostrated with their grief, generally, I fancy, sooner get over it. By the way, who are John & Julia? I suppose it was Mr. Iranoff, who wrote you all about it, was it not? I don't think I ever heard of those two names before, & they seem very English to be living in Syra. Perhaps you are giving Fred's translation of the French names.

The Young people seemed to be all right, except Binney, about the teeth, for which he has my sympathy. Tis a terrible business, having one's teeth put to rights. I am glad to hear you like the newspaper, Pet, but mind you keep the bad parts from the girls.

In Tom's report, which, as you say, is good in most respects, has one odd thing in it. Under week 7 - place is shown as 18 and Report VB. I take it his place for week 7 of the term was 18th out of 19th in the form, & report was very bad. Oh dear! What happened? Find out & let me know, but don't say anything to Tom. Tis too late, for reproach from me to do good. I am beginning to find out, about what somebody said "Tom's Laloë" and I asked in my last. I remember, near the first of the year, there was some chaff which you told me of, but in the sentence, there was one word left out, & I puzzled over & over again about it, but at last left it unsolved. I see, he is one of the boys at school. I see also Parker Geo is two forms above Tom, under Mr Dasent. That is, I suppose, Parker's son, is it not?

Tis getting on, darling, now, 11 o'clock, and I think, I will have to stop and attend to some work. I wrote Parker a long letter, a short time ago, after having neglected him somewhat, so I hope to get news of him.

There has been awfully hot weather here lately, 106° to 107° in the house, but yesterday & today have been quite pleasant, cloudy all day & a fresh wind blowing. The heat has been worse this year than last, very much worse. There has been less rain, and the wind, that we ought to have from a wet country south of us, has not commenced yet. It may be the cloudy weather, yesterday & today, is the beginning of better weather.

This is now Saturday, & last day of writing. They have made the change in mail days, to suit the monsoon arrangement of steamers from Bombay. The mail steamer (English mail) leaves this on Sunday morning, and letters have to be posted Saturday night, instead of Monday night. The arrangement is better than last year, there being two mail steamers, from here to Calcutta, in the week.

Events have moved a little, since this was stopped yesterday. I wired to Salmond, to know about his taking over charge, & learn, that he had written to propose Monday, so it may be, that I will start away from here on Sunday, a week from tomorrow, if we are speedy in handing over business. At any rate, it will be the following Thursday. I am writing to the Post Office Rangoon, to try and stop my letters there, if possible, but every thing in Burma, like post offices etc, is so badly managed, that I dare say my arrangement won't work. I don't want to be kept out of my letters from you, for weeks after they are due. I have not heard anything about my final destination yet. Buyers probably does not know. They could not fix on any place for Owen to go, & I daresay there is the same difficulty regarding me.

Parker has just been gazetted, in a formal way, to the Railway as Engineer in Chief, at which he has been working for more than a year. I don't quite know what the meaning of it is, but possibly it may indicate more operations. I would like to join Parker, but that Lesmond and Whileford are there, and it would not be pleasant, occupying the position they would give me, along side them.

It is not just what I should like, having to leave this, and go down to Rangoon, to kick my heels for an indefinite period, & probably having to do some uncongenial work in Buyer's office, but on the whole, I am rather glad to do something. Tis very wearisome

hanging about here, with no interest in anything, & having to do a certain amount of work, to keep things going.

By the way, there was a rumour, which I think I told you of, that they had offered my services to the Burma Provincial. I now learn, that they did not want me. I am glad of that, & all along thought, it should likely to be so, as they had difficulty in disposing of the last man, who was sent from India. It would be an awful thing, to have been stuck away in Burma Provincial P. Works, & just the last straw.

I don't think it will do you much good, to keep on writing. I cannot get out of this strain and need not expect to have any spirits, till I get out of this, so I'll just wind up.

With love to all, yourself especially, darling, very Your Own, Fred.
P.S. the most important part of the letter - parcel came in yesterday, darling - unbirthday present. Ever so many thanks, Pet. The coat fits capitally & I had to start off to the Palace, to show myself in it, within half an hour after it was opened, after putting the black band on sleeve. The trousers, when I tried them on, seemed just a little too long, probably would get trodden on, but that is easily remedied. Any *Durzee*, with needle & thread & hot iron, would make it right, in half an hour. I was awfully pleased, to see the parcel come in. I had a horrid dread, that it would go roaming about, after me, half over India. Now it will go strutting about, with me inside.

I must go and see my packing boxes, & have them put to right. Yesterday I only got as far as having my guns & pistol cleaned & packed, and the boxes were brought out for inspection. After which, I was too busy to inspect. Must stop now. Fred

Begin again - About Binney, & your idea of his entering the Church. I would not, in any way, interfere with his inclination, to prevent his doing so, but I would not have advised me to it. Of course, there is no prospect, of anything like a living for him, but his taking orders might help him towards masterships, & that sort of thing.

No paper this time, Pet, it has not come, probably detained in Rangoon Post Office.

"unbirthday present" - from Humpty Dumpty in Alice through the Looking Glass

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Mandalay, 19 May

Emmie darling

You won't get much of a letter this time, but don't be angry about it. I am so upset, that I don't believe there'll be a single pleasant line in it. I am a little seedy, but that's not much consequence, indigestion etc. My plans, which I thought were going smoothly, are all upset. I thought to be writing this, on board the steamer, going to Rangoon, to have two quiet days on it. My packing is done, & nothing but a gunny bag or two, to put over the things. All the certificates were written out, and every one ready to wish me safe voyage, when lo!! a telegram came, from Buyers, telling me to wait for a letter, which was coming, before leaving Mandalay. I have not the faintest idea, what the letter is about, & Buyers has not the civility, to let me know anything, about my probable

arrangements. It may be, that he does not know himself, but it has the look, of wanting to increase my discomfort.

I had another project in mind, but that has fallen through, because of Wadley. I intended going up the River, in a steamer to Bhamo, which is the boundary between Upper Burmah and China. They say the trip is a very pleasant one. The River runs through some defiles that are remarkable. One takes two days to get up, two days stay there, and return again in two days. Live on board the steamer while at the place, so there is not much *bandobast* to make. It would have suited me nicely. However, Wadley failed me. I wanted a companion, & he promised to come, but made a muddle about getting his leave. After he had cancelled it, my leave was sanctioned.

It happened, that this letter, which I am to wait for, missed a mail, that is, was written the day after mail left, so I have to wait nearly a week before it gets here. After that, it may be, if there is nothing definite about my orders, that I will do the Bhamo trip after all. It will save me a week of weary waiting at Rangoon, & will cost very little more than living there at an hotel. Mrs Buyers has asked me to stay with them, but I think I won't. I will make a pretence of wishing to be near the steamer, with my load of baggage. Their house is three miles away. I like Mrs Buyers, but old B is simply detestable, and I would much rather be clear of him. I shall have to answer Mrs Buyers' note by this mail, and I will dissemble, say it would give me great pleasure etc, but as my time of going to Rangoon is now so uncertain, that I would ask to have it kept an open question, & then after that, I will wriggle out of it.

This is afternoon, darling, and not very long before mail time, and I don't feel more brilliant than I did at first. I have spent such a time, trying to find a book, which has either been mislaid, or taken away, & I was awfully put out about it, as I now have to give up my intention about it. Tis either lost, or packed, & soldered up, where I can't see it for months. I intended it for Binney, but don't now say anything about it.

Now, darling, for your letter, 18th to 20th April. You all seemed to be doing pretty well, darling. I don't quite see the bottom of that business with the Greek lawyer (is he not?) Mr Iranoff, darling, where Irve's actions has upset you. The copy of letter to Mr I., which you said you enclosed, was forgotten, Pet, & that perhaps might have made it all clear. Irve is a little inclined to be masterful, and sometimes loses sight of the fact, that he has not the least right in the world to act for you, without your consent. I won't say anything more, just now, darling, beyond that, if the Estate is what you say, poor Polexeny will want the interest of the whole of it, during her life. But, there, I won't say more now, as I am not quite sure how the matter stands.

So Will Robinson has come back again. I suppose, now, you will learn something about the reason for his going out to Sierra Leone. It's funny sending a young officer out there, for such a short time. To replace anyone on leave, even, it seems strange. They would scarcely give such short leave, unless the duty could go on, without such a special arrangement, as getting another out from England to take his place.

I am sending two "Weeks News" this time, Pet. For some reason, none came last week, and two this time.

I have been interrupted here, several times, some business, some private arrangements, and then to arrange for Newham coming in to dinner. It was a complication, as Alexander also had a guest coming in, but he and his guest were going to dine out, and consequently Cook had made arrangements for me only. Now it has to be supplemented. There is Gillians, in Salmonds house, and we are sending away 5 lbs of ice, by train and trolley.

That is a bad place, Kyauksai, where Owen lived. Every one seems to get ill there. By the way, if it's a comfort to you, the Dr refused to give me a sick certificate, a few days ago. He previously told me he would give me a cert. to send me home and I asked him if he could do so now. I wanted to provide against being kept in Burmah. He said "Oh no!! I couldn't give one now. You have been so well lately".

I will be so glad when this uncertainty is over. I am rather weary of it. Will stop now, darling. Forgive short shabby letter. I thought I should not be able to write even this much.

Love to all, every your own, Fred.

*Irve is Emmie's surviving brother, who is presumably sorting out their brother's affairs, and being tactless about it! Irvine is in Canada, Emmie is in England and Willie used to live in Greece, which must complicate things.*

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## **Rangoon** – waiting for next job

Rangoon, 25 Jun 88

Emmie darling

This is not to be much of a letter, as nothing has occurred to alter the previous state of things. I am still on my sumptuous privilege leave. You know what I mean. Nothing in the way of orders has come for me, but the rest is doing me good, and the change of climate.

The worst of it is, there is nothing in the way of amusement possible. The weather is so uncertain, that nothing can be planned. Hogarth & the Traffic Superintendent have offered to take me driving about, but almost every afternoon, the rain comes pouring down, & the walk from here to the Club for *tiffin* is a matter of great risk. There is very little charm in driving about in a *tikka gharri*, or I might drive out to Gardens & meet the people I know, but the *gharri* is the only way of avoiding a ducking, so I leave it.

I called at Govt. House, that is, on the Chief Commissioner, but they have not honoured me with an invitation of any kind, & now I see the C. C. is starting out on a tour, I suppose, to Mandalay, so I will not be troubled with that sort of discomfort. I am glad that I went to call, but I was not in want of the invitations.

The mourning for the German Emperor has prevented gaieties. We have all been ordered to wear mourning, & Lady Crosthwaite has put off an "at home" because of it, so

the Chief will save a lot of dollars. They say, he is trying, in that direction. By the way, you have noticed, I suppose, that the Chief has become a "Sir" & Mrs Crosthwaite a "Lady", Molesworth also is a "Sir" & Mrs M "Lady" - birthday honours.

I have just finished a job in tinkering, which leaves a blank, making a packing box for my lamp. I sold an old lamp I had, when leaving Mandalay, & bought a new one here, & then I was put to it, for means of carrying the thing about. So I went to the shop, where I purchased my wines and stores, & got old packing cases, from which I manufactured a splendid packing case, into which the lamp, and oil vessel, and glass shade, & reflector for reading, pack away most splendidly, with[*out*] danger of coming out promiscuous. Each piece has a separate compartment, with pieces of cork & cloth packing sides to it. It has gone off to the bazaar this morning, to be painted black, and get rid of ...

*Subsequent page/s are missing*

*"promiscuous" - random, indiscriminate, unsystematic.*

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Rangoon, 2 July 88

Emmie darling

I am a little bit corked in my arrangements, having had to clear out from my former quarters, and come in to Club Chambers. Johns came back three days before he first intended, and I had to flit, & here, as yet, there is nothing comfortable round me. Another thing upset me. I did not get your letters & paper, till this morning, instead of yesterday morning, when the English Mail was delivered. The Post Office people are awfully careless & incompetent here, & they do things perfectly outrageous.

I have not been able to get those missing papers yet, with the last chapter of Beautiful Jim in them. It was too provoking. Nor can I find any one else who take the paper from whom I might pilfer them.

There has not come anything yet from India, about my transfer, & I am simply doing nothing, on full pay, as before. I really have ceased to care much about the delay. As I have often told you, tis better waiting here than in Calcutta, where it is still awfully hot, from what the papers say.

Buyers can not be very proud of his operation just now, I think. The Viceroy & Secretary of State (if you please) have telegraphed, congratulating him on such an early completion of the line, when in reality there are many months work necessary, to make it passable. 5 Ex.Engineers have gone from their Divisions, and those who are remaining have three times as much work as they can do, & as far as really finishing goes, it will be many months later, than it otherwise might have been, if he had let us alone. I believe my Old Division is now more nearly finished, than any of the others. All the difficult part of the Bridge had been finished before I left, as I must have told you, & they have now nearly finished. They will be able to run trains over it in its complete state next month. It's all nonsense, the idea that any thing is gained, by so many of us going away, as there is not one, who is doing anything else, & I am as bad as on privilege leave. I do absolutely nothing but draw pay.

By the way, a *dacoity* occurred, last night, on the line between this and Prome, that is, that is the state of present reports. It is reported, that the dacoits, to the number of 400, pulled up the line, cut the telegraph wires & derailed the train during the night. Two men were killed, but it is not known how, yet. Tis the first time, anything of the kind has been attempted. They were taking the English mail up to Prome, where they catch the steamer, to go to Mandalay. It is rather hazy in detail, just at present, but it will make the authority "sit up", occurring in Lower Burma, in the midst of, what was generally supposed, Civilization.

I was interrupted here by boy, bringing in a piece of furniture, to wit, my office writing box, and having to shift everything in the room. I therefore went off to *tiffin*, & was caught in the rain, an awful downpour, & kept it up pretty well till midnight.

It's now Tuesday morning, and last time of writing. Been out for a walk, & feel better for it. I hope we will have some fine, today. Tis very depressing, sitting in one's ½ furnished room all day, with everything damp and unpleasant.

Now, darling, for your letter, 4th June. Tis too bad, that I have not better news for you, as you are so anxious to know my destination. I quite understand the feeling, darling, & began that way. Indeed, urgent telegrams were sent, to find out something, but now I am in an entirely different frame of mind, & really don't care a little bit, how long they have me drawing pay for nothing. Barring the uncertainty, there is nothing to grumble at. You must try get into that frame of mind, for there have now 6 letters gone, since that you are acknowledging, with the same information.

I could see, all through your letter, Pet, that you weren't fit, from your seediness, of which you before complained, & that it ended, as I expected, in a bad time. Tis too bad, Pet, that you should suffer so, but I think it makes one less anxious, for knowing the reason, of your getting so seedy at times.

Other things in your letter, darling, seemed to be going on well. Fred had apparently started with his exam, & things seem moving smoothly. I was glad of your explanations about the scholarship. You all seemed so full of it, & anxious for Fred to succeed, that I fancied it must be some other way. I had the correct notion, however. I am looking forward to hear more of Fred's lodging experience. He will be all alone o'nights, & the change from his school life will be immense, without the comfort of having you and the Family near at hand. However, he is not sensitive to excess, that such a thing might worry him, & it will help him to experience in life. This, he would have avoided, by being at Putney, but what you said, about other things there, being a trouble and bother to him, & would probably counterbalance the other benefit. I have a horror myself of being alone, & one is apt to think what one's own feelings would be, but, I believe, Fred is not like me in that respect.

I must tell you the latest, about the *dacoit* business on the line. They had information, that an attempt would be made to wreck the train, & on sending word in, a pilot train protected, and with Police on board, was sent on ahead of the Mail train (it was the train carrying the English Mail), and the dacoits not knowing probably anything about the pilot train, derailed that instead of the mail train, & found themselves confronted by

an armed force, instead of sleeping passengers. Tis rumoured that two dacoits were shot, and that no one in the train was worse, except Engine driver who had hurt his shin. Tis the first time *dacoits* have ever done anything of the kind. They seized a platelayer's *mistri* or a gateman, & made him go along with them, & bring his tools, as without tools, little could be done. It was a clever thing to do. Of course, the mistake was not allowing the Pilot train to pass, have everything ready, & then complete the last detail, for derauling the mail train. I hope they will catch and shoot some of them.

The letter, about Willie's affairs, were a satisfactory one to get, darling, & must have relieved you much, & been a great comfort to those in Canada. I don't quite understand the name. Polexeny was a Miss Ralli, surely, so this man must be brother in law. I thought it was a brother at Alexandria, that she was going to live with. You must send me some particulars, so that if ever I make the voyage home or out, & go to Alexandria, I might find them out, and go and see them.

All right about Laloe. I am glad to hear that the young lady is not a man. Tis better I think as it is. I was very much struck with the name, & you used to write about, as though I knew it from my earliest years. I had an old Chinaman carpenter whose English as it was spoke by him amused me very much. He always used to say laloo when he meant it was all right. I think the word was a corruption of "that will do" but that must remain an unsolved mystery.

About that business of Irvine telling the Greek people, about the reversion of money, left by poor Willie, I would not worry, darling. I can quite see that Irvine would, or might have, written, without thought of it reflecting on you, and if he had no thought, of how it would appear to you, or from your point of view, I would think no more about what he did. Some men have the most serious objection to writing a business letter over again, and he may not have thought of your being hurt by the way it was done, when he did write.

Binney seemed to be getting on all right. He will have started on his travels before this, I daresay, & I hope he will enjoy his trip. I often feel inclined to write, about his idea of taking orders, but again, I say I won't. You often tell me of his serious way of looking at these things, and if he feels convinced, beyond doubt or a shadow of doubt, it will be the proper thing for him, & it may be that such an idea will guide him, but should there be any - the smallest suggestion of doubt - I don't think it the right thing to do. A man may be as good, conscientious, upright and blameless in his life, without taking orders in the Church, but there is more responsibility in being a teacher, and influencer of others. However, I wrote before, it is a matter where he should be guided by his own conviction of what is right, & he is in a position to know for himself, and be able to form his convictions.

You will see, darling, that I am not sending money this month, having arranged for an investment here, but by your last, I am a little made to doubt, and I hope, when something is made certain about Fred, you will be able to put it down on paper, & send me. There ought to be time for you to write, & let me hear, and act, before much harm is done, after receipt of my last letter.

I have some business to do, & some arrangement about my pay for last month to write about, so I'll stop now.

With love to all & yourself especially, my darling, Ever your own, Fred

"English As She Is Spoke" was a 19th-century Portuguese-English phrase book, which was so bad, that the title passed into common usage.

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Rangoon, 9 July 88

Emmie darling

Tis such a nice bright cheerful looking morning, after all the rain we have had, that one feels almost inclined to be cheerful. Twas raining last night in torrents, just before I went to sleep, giving a very dismal feeling, as we have had so much of it. One never can make any arrangement, for doing amusements which require combination with fellow man, as it is sure to be marred by a downpour of rain.

I had arranged, over and over again, to go with Hogarth to the Gymkhana, I to walk to the office, & he to drive me, then he was to come to the Club for me when starting away, but I succeeded, at last, in getting there, but picked up in the street by an acquaintance here of the Club, who happened to drive past me, as I loafed along the road taking a walk. My eyes, what a tremendous fine place that Gymkhana has got to be. It is, I believe, the biggest thing in the Indian Empire, better than a club, as the whole place is given up to games & amusements, tennis, billiards, whist, bowls, Band playing & flirtations. They have a cricket field also. It seems to be double what it was two years ago, & the building, being new & built for the purpose, is much better than such things generally are. I don't think, I will actually subscribe & join, because I really care little for ordinary games with strangers, & tennis is very uncertain in this weather. The courts are *pukka* & can't get wet, but it generally is not fine long enough for a game. But apart from that, the place is 2 miles away & will cost considerably in *gharri* hire. I never hire a *gharri* now, unless I am caught in a rainstorm, when 6 *annas* worth will generally take me to shelter.

I have heard no more about myself at all, beyond that the Secretary to Government told me to wait. The Government of India must be induced to move. However, I am getting almost content to stop here, until there is some sort of certainty, that I can go at once to my destination. They have had rain in Calcutta, and tis, of course, much cooler than before, but this place is really cool. I have been getting better in health since I came, but all this, I have written so often, darling, you will be rather bored. The worst part of the situation is, that you are worried so much, because it is not settled. I never had such a long interval of idleness, without being on leave, & the uncertainty must, with you, Pet, be very disturbing. If you could only be here, & idle with me, I should be happy as possible.

I can see by your last letter, that you were quite upset, by not getting your usual letter from me, little thinking if it had come, there would have been no news in it at all. I feel upset, darling, by your again having distemper. That pain in feet must either be a

gouty symptom, or the result of your over-working - the later, I fancy, as you describe having all the work to do from Mary being ill, and Miss Wilson visiting you. I wish, you could (or would rather) make those girls take some of that sort of thing, off your hands, but you were always sacrificing yourself to give others an easy time. The girls would be improved, if they could be made a little more like their mother. I think, both would be industrious, but I fancy that they are wanting in making a *bandobast*, to do certain duty wholly of themselves, & relieving you of it.

Since my last, I have been out the line to the Locomotion workshop place, and the man in charge seems very anxious to have me go out again, & often. He would go as far as to put me up but that would hardly do, as he is an utter stranger, or was till the other day. He is a very nice chap indeed. His wife is at *home*, and there is a great big house, & nice establishment, empty all but himself. There is only two other men (gentlemen) in the place and it's not enough for society, so I daresay he's right, in saying it would be a kindness to go. If I knew him a little better, I think I should propose to go, & live, & share expenses, & amuse myself in the workshop. I fear it is not feasible, but I shall go down, a time or two again, and then see. By the way, I must write and get a pass.

I fear you will not fare well in this letter, Pet. It seems to be made up of twaddle. There is nothing to write about, & I see no chance of making it better. Perhaps if I were to stop, & go to breakfast, I might improve afterwards. I think I will take a little walk first in this fine morning. Here goes *boy!! "Humaru kupra tyai karo"*.

I am back again, but don't feel much more fit for writing. I went for a walk, and found that the clear bright day was due to a tropical sun, & the benefit was not as great as might have been expected, from the absence of rain. I had an interview with an English foreman sort of party, who is working for English contractors, laying down sewage pipes on a wonderful principle lately patented. It was quite interesting to hear all about it. I think of going tomorrow out to the Locomotive works again, and have sent for passes. It will be something to do.

There is not much to answer in your letter, darling, 13-15 June, beyond imploring you not to work so hard. It is a pity, you cannot go away for a holiday, darling, but as you say, the enjoyment would be pretty well marred by your worrying about the children, and things that want doing at home. If I was only with you, I can't but think, we might make such a holiday, & have enjoyment & comfort. We could talk over what worried you, & I could explain it away. Oh dear!! What's the good of this style? Will it ever happen?

I don't quite understand, about my letter not reaching you. The date was not that, when I was coming away from Mandalay, & might have got letter astray, by posting it on the steamer. It must have been, when the change for Monsoon running of steamers took place, & the only way, I could prevent you being without, would have been to write twice by the same steamer leaving Mandalay. As I remember it, there was not an extra steamer put on, but a longer interval than usual between them. However, Pet, this has all settled itself by this time, & probably something in my letter will explain how it came about. At any rate, this will. I am sorry, darling, you should have been so worried.

It's very sad, about that child Brooks being drowned. I remember the father. He was a Doctor living at Jamalpur (not Jubblepoor) in Bengal. He was Dr. to the East Indian Railway. I think I must have told you at the time, he, with his wife and a small boy, came back to India in the steamer with me. I like the Dr very much, and the Mrs was very nice too, but so Irish. The boy was the greatest young pickle you ever saw, always getting into scrapes of sorts, and not afraid of doing or trying anything. If the family were like this small boy, I am not surprised at some of them coming to grief, but the Mother will probably have a good many more, before it stops.

Now, darling, about steel trunks. I daresay, they are, what you have taken as tin ones, but they are really of thin sheet steel. I bought one the other day, & I am trying to get the label off, & send you with the paper. They are really of steel, & very strong, but no lighter than the stoutest leather.

I don't think I have anything more to write about, darling. I have taken to walks, which are gradually getting longer. There is a line of tramway, which runs straight up the road, where I go, for more than a mile, & if it comes on to rain, or the walk gets too long, I can have a remedy - go out to the Cantonment gardens, which are looking beautiful just now, after all the rain. I fear we shall have rain tonight, and I must do without any walk, and be content with reading English papers at the Club.

I must stop, and put up the "Weeks News" for you, darling. *Boy* will soon be here to get *ghusal* ready. All my love, darling, & love to the young people individually. I expect to hear much next letter.

Your own Fred.

*Mary is, I assume, Emily's servant.*

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Rangoon, Monday 30 July

Emmie darling

I have been out for a little walk, and am now waiting for breakfast time to come round, so begin this. Tis fine, & sun shining (too much sunny, rather) but such a treat, after the continual wet. I have never succeeded in getting an afternoon walk, since I wrote about it, always threatening & raining. So when the day is bright in morning, I try to do a little. I am much happier, than when I commenced my last. Your letter has come straight this time. My man brought it from Post, before I was up yesterday, and that's not all. After I mailed my last to you on Tuesday afternoon, your other letter, the first of the two which went astray, also came in, so now there is no gap. Oh, what a worry it was, & to think of my getting into a frame of mind about you, when it happened, that for that fortnight, you were more jolly, & everything seemed to be going on better round you, than was usual.

Now darling, for your last (of the 5th July) first, although there is such a lot in your others, I want to write about. I think, you cheated me out of one sheet, when you took out Binney's, & there is no beginning to the letter - only two sheets of yours, besides Fred's little note. No matter, you were well, & what you did send, was very nice.

Your only misfortune seemed to be the girl, & that did not seem a very bad business, as you had got rid of her. Tis not likely, that much good could have been made of the young woman that you describe, with tricks and manners of that description. No amount of patience or kindness would produce a useful servant, & I don't think you need reproach yourself, with being the cause of her ruin, as Binney apparently was in dread of.

I think, I have made out about Owen. You, writing on Thursday, said he was coming to say Good bye, on Friday or Saturday, in which case, he would miss that week's mail, & be here by the next - that is, in Calcutta. He had it, in writing, that he might overstay his leave for a fortnight, without forfeiting, & that must be what he is doing. No orders have come to me from India, & I daresay, there is the same uncertainty, about something for Owen to do. It may be orders have come, but the Chief Commissioner, *dowering* about the Country, has left the thing without attention, till he returns. At any rate, I expect Owen and I will meet shortly. I heard something, regarding the para in newspaper, saying I was going on leave.

If there was only better weather, and something to do here, I should enjoy myself, as the rest certainly has done me good, but I am tired of it, & would like to look forward to getting to work again. My idea, darling, is to work out the year, & when 3 mos: leave is due to me, go home to you. I can't see that there is the least possible chance of my getting settled in a place, where you can come to me.

I think I'll go to breakfast now, Pet, getting on for 12 and I can write here again after.

Just back, wrote business letter, had breakfast, & took a little stroll, & now rain is coming on, probably to last til midnight. So I am glad I had some walk.

I think, I understand the *bandobast*, Fred goes to Germany with Binney. The last letter left it a little doubtful. I am so very glad. It will do Fred a lot of good, & he deserves a treat of that kind. How kind Miss Binney is!! To think of her doing so much for those boys. Fred will get great enjoyment out of such a trip, & Binney & he will help each other in it. To judge from myself, the great thing, in seeing new places & new countries, is to have a companion. One sees twice as much, & enjoy it doubly, from being able to talk the things over afterwards. I hope the boys will agree. They have been separated so much the last year. There will be more certainty of it, than probably there was before, & their being surrounded by strangers, talking a strange language, will help to make them draw together.

Fred seems to have a great capacity for enjoyment, & it's quite refreshing, when we know how well he can work. I was perfectly delighted with his note to you. It is so natural, & so well expressed. I am glad too, your experiment, of sending him to Lodgings in London, has turned out so well, for those three weeks of his examination. I was a little bit afraid of his being lonesome, when he went home after his work. I suppose his faculty, of making friends of those around him, helped him from being lonesome, as it will help him through life. He is very like you, I think, Pet. Those boys, & the girls too, of course, have a great deal to be thankful for, in having had you with them. It has made them, what they are, the dearest lot of little people, one could find anywhere. My privation comes nearer to being compensated for, than in any other way it could be.

There is one puzzle I want a key to, as Fred says, in this letter. You write "Fred had his likeness taken in case he should leave Haileybury". Is there any doubt about it? Last letter said he had *Qualified* in his exams. Does that not mean that he had passed, in which case he would go at once (or next term) to Woolwich? That is what I thought. You know, Pet, I have not got you all around me, talking of the incidents as they occur, so that one little word would make the whole complete. It increases the pleasure of the news, to know with certainty what has happened. To be sure, I have no one to talk to about them, & so make no mistakes, but in turning these over in my own mind, I like to have the thing very straight. What I have worked out of it now is, the Exams are all over, but Fred has to wait, till it is officially announced, whether he has succeeded or not, is that not so? By next mail or that after, perhaps, I shall hear something, as it develops, but it would be a great thing, to have something to go on with. So you won't mind, darling, my asking you to write, as though I was a stupid old cuss, as perhaps I am, & want to have everything in each letter, complete in itself each time. Forgive, darling.

I am so glad to hear, you are so well and jolly, in spite of the extra work you have to do when without your servant, up at 5.30 in the morning, and hard at work all day, and well and jolly through it all. If you could teach those girls to do those things, and be as good as their mother, they (& some one else probably) will bless you hereafter. Oh my! my!! If I could only be there, & see you do it!

Binney, in his letter, which I got, after mine to you was finished (no! it was the other previous mail letter, that came in last) - however - he said the trip to Germany was to commence in the middle of Aug, so it will be some time before I hear about that, but there will be lots to hear of their doings and sayings during holidays. The wanderings, darling, will be a relief to you, as when you get the whole flock collected together, they are almost too much for you, with the propensity you have, of doing so much for them yourself. I am perfectly delighted, that both those boys are going to see some of the outer world together.

The rain is keeping off, & perhaps we shall have a fine afternoon, & I'll make ready for a walk. There will be all tomorrow to write more, if more can be found.

This is now Tuesday afternoon, & there does not seem to be much more to write about. It did not rain badly, all yesterday, only a shower early in the afternoon, so I got a walk after all, and feel better for it, slept better at night. Today, too, it has been fine and sunny all day, & I had a walk in the morning. I went, last evening, on board one of the new British India steamers. There were some wonderful improvements in machinery, electric lights, etc. The officers wanted to know if I was to be a passenger, on Wednesday. How I wish, I could have said Yes. One of the lost papers came in this morning, having been sent to Mandalay, so you will have two this week, but there seems no chance of recovering the last parts of Beautiful Jim.

I have been having a regular old-fashioned cold in my head (instead of fever). It seems as though a change had taken place in my system. It felt so strange, but I shall be glad when tis over. Tis not as bad as fever, but one does not feel as well as one might, without any distemper. Tis really quite hot today, the worst of this climate. When the sun

shines, as is natural, this being the hottest month in the year, naturally it gets very hot indeed, without wind, and if rain comes on, especially towards afternoon, it gets quite cold and chilly, so tis difficult to cloth oneself properly. The new suit, you sent out, has done splendid service, makes me look quite respectable and the afternoons are quite cool enough for it generally, but this afternoon I must put on a lighter coat till after my walk, & make *boy* take a change to the Club.

I stopped here to look over the paper, before getting ready for post to you, Pet. I don't think anything more to write about, although there is some one thing, I have long been thinking of, but always somehow forget. No use continuing this style. The rain has commenced without any warning, & my hopes of a walk have departed. Nothing left for me but read newspapers at the Club.

Love to all, darling, with full share for yourself, Ever your own Fred.

Binney has been at Oxford this last year. Fred (junior) has been in lodgings, taking the entrance exam for the Royal Military Academy, at Woolwich.

Rangoon, 5th Aug 88

Emmie darling

This is Sunday morning. I am awaiting arrival of breakfast time, and making a beginning at this. I really feel as though I must only make a beginning, as I never felt so blank in my life. I really have nothing to say, about myself and surroundings. "No orders have come yet".

The people, in society here, make efforts to amuse it, but they do some things which are very ridiculous in my eyes - to wit, they have an assembly room, which facetious ones call the Theatre Royal. It is a shanty built of bamboos and thatch, & at all entertainment the men go dressed. Last night it was to hear that buffoon Dav Carson. He was supposed to have drunk himself to death long ago, but it seems he only went into an Asylum, & has been to a certain extent resuscitated. He has been here, now, a fortnight, & drunk all the time. I could not muster energy enough to dress for that, and pay Rs 4/- a seat (all others are filled with soldiers) 2/8 for *gharri* hire, and drive two miles there & two back. I said I'd wait, till I heard how near sober the performer was. They had amateur theatricals, which I am sorry that I missed, but there was the dress, the long drive, & pouring rain there to contend with.

I am getting more than a little tired of my life here now, when I think that the mail will have brought back Owen to swell the Unemployed. They say there are lots in India. Rumours, more or less favorable, are going about, but tis no use saying anything about them, being very vague & possibly without foundation. Sanction has come, to make surveys up further north than Mandalay. It was thought that it might not come, as money is so scarce with Government now. I am glad to say, that I am not likely to be drawn into that. Buyers has made up his parties, and the Doctor here says, he will give a certificate, that I am not fit for duty in that country. I was a little bit anxious to get off,

actually out of the country, before Sanction came, and now, as far as one can see, perhaps Owen may be back here again to await orders, with a renewed constitution, that will prevent his getting certificate, that will keep him from the survey. I have talks with the men here, about prospects and probabilities, but we all get round and round in a circle, & end up where we began.

I must not forget tho, to tell you what Hogarth said yesterday. You are likely to have Mrs Bull to live at Bedford. Hogarth has, all along, been very full, of what he heard from you, & your arrangements to go there, & told me all that passed, regarding the bargain of the house, & I have little doubt, he has been enlarging to Bull, about the advantages of going to Bedford, but I leave you to rejoice or otherwise at Mrs B going there. She is, as Mrs Lambert has often told you, a frisky Matron, & I dare say you won't cotton to her much. I don't think she started as a lady quite, but she was always pleasant to me, & she will not have money enough to swagger in Bedford, if all said is true about Bull's mode of getting rid of his income.

Don't be distressed about Owen's talk about me. They were all a little bit jealous, about my getting the big Bridge and Owen was told officially, that he had no experience in Railways, & that was the reason he did not get on. He is Buyer's senior, & protested against being under Buyers. O is my senior also, as far as length of service goes, but he has had absolutely no Railway experience. He got his work here in rather a muddle, & established a reputation of being an awfully quarrelsome fellow. I heard from outsiders, to wit, the Civil Surgeon, that he had the reputation of quarrelling all round, with the Civil & Police people.

The said Dr Civil Surgeon knows all about Owen's wife, & her doings. She was a Miss Beeston, daughter of the Civil Surgeon (I think) of Nagpur, a few years ago. She was pretty, a great flirt, and the belle of the place. A lot of men were mad after her, & Owen, unfortunately for him, came off with the prize. Owen is a very quiet fellow in his manner, & I liked him, although I could see his weaknesses. How he ever took to a Station flirt is beyond me to understand, but he has made other mistakes in life, but of course not so bad as that. He is the most untidy fellow about his work and his house - the latter used to be beastly - I ever saw, and when he was ill, I never saw such a cantankerous beggar to do anything for, in my life.

I have been keeping off your letter, Pet, just to see if I could write something independent, before getting to it, & I have done pretty well. There are some things in it, but not many that will help my composition, & that I really want to ask about.

The English Mail came in yesterday morning, from Calcutta, just 24 hours before usual time, so our Sunday lacks one of its excitements. The picture papers at the Club have all been inspected, & crumpled up before the idle Sunday came on. On Sunday, the long arm chairs are all taken up, with readers all day, when the English Mail has newly arrived. They are fairly well behaved here, in some of their manners. They seldom go to Church, tis true, but they won't play billiards.

Now, darling, I'll stop, till after breakfast, I think, & must tackle what I have to say about your letter then, when I can see my way through to the end.

Monday 6th Aug - Am going to write more, darling, & probably finish, but there is just the off-chance, my having a word to put in, at the last. A Telegram has come this morning, from Owen. He is in Bombay - or rather was - now on way to Calcutta, & wants to know by wire what's the news. I suppose, from that, he has received no orders in Bombay, & if none are sent to Calcutta from here, he probably will have to come to Rangoon. What a muddle, all round, is being made of this business. I wrote quite a long letter to Owen, to Calcutta, & a note to Bombay, but he would seem to have missed the later.

Now, darling, about your letter of 11th etc July. You seem to have worn yourself out, somewhat, by doing the servant's work, but on Friday, the last state of the person is better than the first, you say, so I hope, there is not much harm come to you, & that your girl had come to relieve you. The Girls, apparently, were having a good holiday, but wanted to come home. I like to see them want to come home.

Binney's note is first-rate, tells me exactly what is to be done, & when, & I can follow them. It will be a change, & I think, such a delight to those two, & their going alone, I mean in charge of themselves, will be a useful thing for them. I suspect, however, they have, both of them, good training, in taking care of themselves & now when I come to think of it, I began to take care of myself, before I was Binney's age, & with a good deal less training. I read in a book, the other day, in training young people, you must not take the place of Providence with them too much, but you should leave them to Providence, & their own arrangements. I am pleased, beyond expression, at what you tell me Fred is, what a favorite with every one. Tis just the time, when I should like to see him.

I fear, there is not much good, to be got out of talking with Owen. By the way, Owen has not seen Fred. He does not take much interest, in other people's affairs, and always gives the idea that he is overwhelmed with his own, & which, by the way, he has to repress. However, if he does not express favorably of Binney, & those he has seen, we won't make much progress towards further friendship.

Now, about Fred. Probably before this reaches you, the whole business will be made clear to me, & I wrote about it last mail, but it is working itself out even now. I wish I knew, for certain, but my previous notion, I fear, was utterly wrong. No matter now what that was, but the present state is: The Examination, through which he has lately gone, is that, you are writing about, and you are waiting for the Official notice of how everyone has passed or failed. (Fred's going off again on the 12th, that you write of, has reference to going to Germany, & nothing to do with the Exam:). There can only two Commissions to be given this year, & those, who have passed highest, get them, and all below that, get nothing by the Exam: at all. If Fred is not one of the two, he can, from his age, go up compete again next year, & get the Commission in Oct 1889. Now, darling, if it is not all done and settled, & written about, before this reaches you, I want you to tell me how far I am right, & make the thing plain for me. I can't hear & know the little bits of information you get, & talk over from time to time, so I want something more, than simply the history of the interval between one letter and the next. Think me stupid,

darling, if you will, but remember I have to think about these things, all alone by myself, no one to talk to about them but they serve me, to think through and work to a conclusion.

Ask Binney to tell me, about this meeting to be held in the first week in August at Oxford, of those engaged in University Extension. There is an account of it in the weekly Times of July 13th. Could anyone work away, & read independently, and ultimately take an Oxford degree without residence? I could write a lot more, but must leave room, in case some news turns up through my messenger, about Owen. I have sent to the Office, to know if any orders have come in about him, or any news which affects him. I must go now to breakfast, darling, & in case I have no room to write, I say now,

Love to all, Your own, Fred.

This is Tuesday morning, & mail closes tonight, but I have not much to add to this. The information, to be communicated to Owen, was nil, no orders have come for him, & his transfer to India is not even settled upon. I advised him to report at Calcutta, and ask for orders there.

The rain kept off yesterday pretty well, & I managed my walk, got 5 miles done, but the band playing, I went to hear, at the Cantonment Gardens, was stopped for some reason. I have succeeded lately, in nearly re-establishing the walk institution, & have accomplished several 5 mile walks, which do me great good. Tis rather lonely business without a companion of any sort. All others who would, & I care to have, join me have tennis, & rackets, etc & won't walk. Love Fred.

"The last state of the person is better than the first" - Matthew ch12 v45: "the last state of that man is worse than the first".

"The girl" is the servant. "The Girls" are Jennie and Bessie.

The Oxford University Extension was an outreach, not formal degree teaching. Fred (senior) has problems understanding British education!

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Rangoon, 13th Aug 88

Emmie darling

I believe tis the chronic feeling with me, when I begin to write, that I really have nothing to say, & this time, if at no other, a letter cannot be produced. To begin, no orders have come for me.

Owen has arrived, that is, he is in India, and has managed to get himself stopped in Calcutta, without being obliged to come all the way here, and join at Mandalay at his own expense, which the strict interpretation of the rules would require. Thus his transfer is insured. They telegraphed at the last, from Simla, to know if he could not be employed on the Surveys here, but that would not suit Buyers, who hates him worse than he does me. I hope, I may see Owen, before the fact, of his having actual seen you all, wears off from his mind. It soon will, of course, but we could talk 5 minutes (without his yawning) about you, and that will do me good.

For a few days since I last wrote, we had fine weather part of the 24 hours, and I managed to get walks, but I have never succeeded in making a habit of it, so as to do me good properly. Twice I have dined out, & have fairly enjoyed myself, but the extra expense, of accepting such hospitality, always occurs to me. Each of those dinners, & the return, will cost me Rs8/-, beside having paid for my own dinner under contract.

They (Government of India) have sanctioned making further surveys up to the north of Mandalay, and they are to go on next season, from Dec probably. Buyers has written to say, he had no objection to my going on them, but I have, and if they do actually propose for me to go, the Civil Surgeon has promised me a certificate, to say, my health won't permit me to go back to that country for survey work. Buyers is always getting gout, or some other distemper, that confines him to his house for several days, after every trip up the line. He generally, when his wife is not with him, takes double quantity of *pegs*, but this time, Mrs B was there too, but he had his go of gout all the same. This certainly is a bad country for men that are sound & healthy enough anywhere else, while those, that have weaknesses in their systems, are sure to give way.

Now, darling, I must go to your letter 19th 20th July. It is nice and cheerful, darling, & was welcome to me, (I always feel a little nervous about your letters coming now, Pet) although your old distempers seem to have come back a little. Your powers of keeping giving, and never knowing when you are beaten, are wonderful, and I do hope, some of the children will inherit it. Do you see indications, Pet? Let me hear, whenever that particular perfection of yours, darling, shows. I am in real earnest, darling.

First, I congratulate you, on having got a Girl who seems to suit, or promises to be useful in the near future. I am really glad, darling. I certainly think, you would have worked yourself to death, & the progress, three girls make in being useful to you, does not seem very rapid. I think somehow, Jeannie would, if you let her, & somehow I have an intuitive idea, that when occasion arises and an opportunity is given, Jeannie will display something like the perfection I spoke of, up at top. That occasion, when she shut the bedroom door, & extinguished Bessie when she was afire, was awfully like you, Pet, and I feel, that there is something that will develop, to make her more like you.

Now, darling, I don't know what to say about that tooth business, beyond that it's just like you. Chloroform (that's wrongly spelt) would not have done for you, darling, I am afraid, and the only thing, that would have been prudent, was to have a little done at a time, but I must say this in excuse, I should have gone through it myself, straight and at once, when I had started, so how can I blame you. But you must try and remember, darling, when you run risks, how much & how many are wrapped up and depending on you, and although you probably would not listen for your own sake, you must remember that "your own sake" involves others. I fancy, it's shocks to the system, that you ought to avoid, Pet. But there again, shocks, etc etc, are not half as bad, if you are not afraid, & I believe, you never are afraid.

Thinking over the date, today The Boys start for Germany. How I wish, I could see them off, & wish them luck. I do the latter any how. They are fast asleep now, so not even the catching of the train troubles them yet. They were to be at Putney, on the 12th

Sunday, yesterday, & Binney was to meet Fred there, so I suppose you would not see Binney before they start.

There comes a suggestion from inward, that breakfast time approaches. All, from the Chambers, have been tumbled down stairs, which are just in front of me as I sit, & many have returned after their meal, so my time must have come round.

Been to breakfast, read newspapers, & returned, but my brain seems barren of ideas, & in a worse state than before.

You are quite right, about sending things by Owen. The P.O. is much less trouble to everyone, and as it has turned out, his stopping in Calcutta would have necessitated sending by post after all.

There must have been great days in Bedford, with the opening of the Park, new Bridge, & the illumination on the River. The Illustrated London News has pictures of it, & the last (Iln) must have been very fine.

I have been so puzzled with counting dates etc. You write "Your letter 18th, from Mandalay". Now that 18th must have been 18th June, & I have come to the conclusion, you meant Rangoon, & I am glad I have settled it.

I hope the question about Fred will develop itself before he leaves home. I am a little anxious - think I have the case worked out, as I wrote you in my last - that is - the Exam is over, & you are waiting to hear the decision (I thought when you wrote that he had qualified for Woolwich, that it was settled). There being only 2 vacancies for Commissions, he must pass either 1st or 2nd, or he gets nothing. I had no notion of their being only 2 vacancies. How many went up for the exam?? I thought, that there was very little uncertainty. Now then, darling, I want you to find out exactly how the thing stands, before anything more is done. If he concludes to try again next year, how many commissions are to be given, and what are Fred's Chances? Three C.S.Com. Examiners has been making awful muddles lately, & the newspapers are full of it lately. I take it, if he passes and don't get a vacancy, he has then qualified for Woolwich. Is that it? But, if he has to wait a year, or attend the classes in Woolwich for a year, & then fails, the education, he gets in the attempt, will be of no use to him. At the same time, it might slightly increase his chance, of passing for his Commission, by going to Woolwich, instead of back to Haileybury. Find out, Pet, what is the additional expense would be, in going to Woolwich, instead of Haileybury. Oh dear, oh dear. I looked forward to success, as almost a certainty, on Fred's part, if it was only decided that he should go up. I suppose the whole thing will be settled, & you will have written about it, long before this reaches you, darling, & I shall have been worrying myself, all in vain, that is, without a chance of its doing any good whatever. I will finish tomorrow, Pet. The subject has made me feel more vacant than before, & there is not another word to be got out of me.

Tis Tuesday morning, darling, and last time of writing. I hope next mail will bring me definite news about Fred, so I try not to think more about it.

Now, darling, about the money, next mail, I expect, will bring me a definite reply to my second letter, the one in which I said, I would invest money here, & let you spend what was at home. I did get Rs2000 worth of Govt. notes. I have more now here,

than I could invest, but I don't feel sure, how long you can go on. You said, in the letter asking what to do, there was £200 which waited my advice about, but in subsequent letters, that did not seem so clear, & now, darling, you speak of having taken "£50 of deposit this month", & will take other £50 for next month, but the money, you have spent and will owe, amounts to £150, and you do not say how much more you have. To prevent risks to you, darling, I am going down, now, to the Bank, to tell them to send £60, which will leave me enough to move with (I have paid Club bill this month) when I get orders, even before end of the month. But please, darling, let me know how much you have in deposit at the Bank. I shall be running you into difficulties, if I can not know exactly. Tis wise to invest money here, & use that at home, but don't want to run risks, & let you get short. In writing memos, darling, always put down, what there is left and I want to know, if possible, how much is wanted, month by month - how you can pay from money deposited, and how much you want me to send. I calculate, from what you have written, that you have spent £150, require to pay £50 more before end of Oct, which makes £200 that you asked me about, and at end of Oct, you will have simply nothing left. Therefore I am sending the £60. I don't feel quite sure, darling, if I understand your memo. I wish I could look into the future a little, & plan for the next month or two. Oh dear. I sometimes wonder, that I am not more desponding than I am. But tis no use worrying you, more than can be helped.

My My!! tis near 12, so I must be off. This bank business has to be done. I will leave this open, in case anything has to be said. Love to all. Thank Jeannie for her nice letter, & wish good luck, & much pleasure, to the Boys on their trip.

Much much (all) my love to you darling, Your own, Fred.  
P.S. Have been to the Bank, & ordered £60 to be sent home. They promised, it shall go by this steamer, & the 2 will come to me after. Tis raining & beastly. I should prefer to be in Bedford.

*Owen has just returned from leave in England, where he met Emmie and the family. Fred naturally wants to talk to Owen about this.*

*Fred is staying in "Chambers", where they seem to feed people in shifts!*

*"three girls" - this must be the servant (called a girl), and the two daughters.*

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Rangoon, 20 Aug 88

Emmie darling

Tis after 2 o'clock, and I have wasted my writing time, by taking a walk with dogs, and attending to some business. I should not say "wasted", however, as it really was necessary business, to wit, getting a P.O. order to send for my Madras Club fee, which is late from my change of address, & going to the bank to settle, finally, about last week's remittance, & get my pass book. I have squared up these two things satisfactorily however, & feel easier thereat. Another thing I had to do, to get my last pair of "pinch nez" repaired. I broke them yesterday, by the spring rusting through. I was wrong however, in saying my last pair, as I have just thought of, and found, the 2nd pair you

sent me. Those, I have lately been wearing, are a pair from Orr's. One pair of yours were broken, & laid before me this morning, & I thought I had been wearing the second, but they proved to be old ones of Orr's, so now I am set up again.

I always lately try & get a walk in morning time, as the weather has changed, & it always rains in afternoon, so exercise must be taken in morning, & I feel want of exercise if I miss it altogether. I said above "a walk with the dogs", & must now explain. I have at last got "Vic" back, & a young pup. Did I ever tell before about her? I am not sure, so here is the narration. Just before leaving Mandalay, "Vic" was expecting, & I did not know how to manage matters. It would have been troublesome business, for the steamer or train. So I left her in charge of a doggy friend, who understood such matters, & the affair came off successfully, but before the family was a month old, Elliot (the doggy friend) went away on sick leave, and I thought I might never see "Vic" again. But Newham came to the rescue, had the family taken care of, & finally I have recovered Vic and one Pup. He is such a nice little Chap, as lively as any one could wish, runs about with me and Vic in every walk, & although only three months old, shows lots of character. I have to keep them tied up in a stable below, because of Club rules, but we always have a walk together every day, & sometimes twice a day, if weather permits. It's quite an acquisition to me, having the dogs. My walks before used to be very lonely. When I get a house of my own, & Pup learns manners, I shall be able to have them about with me, all the time. Pup's manners, in one respect, are not quite what they should be, and education is necessary.

I hear not one word about my orders, and Owen now too is waiting, with nothing to do, in Calcutta. You speak, in your letter, of having solved the Mystery, & that I am to go on the Survey from Mandalay towards Assam. But that, I hope, is not so. The Civil Surgeon here told me, I ought not to go back to Upper Burma, and promised a certificate, which I shall use if necessary. I don't want to go back, & shall certainly get out of it, if I can. They say there will be men enough, to make up two survey parties, without Owen & myself, and two parties only have been sanctioned, so I am clinging to the hope, that India somewhere will be my next move. I am pretty thoroughly sick of this idleness, as you may imagine, & if it was not that I am pretty well, I should be in the lowest kind of dumps. However, every one seems to think there's nothing to be done, but to remain quiet.

Now, darling, for your letter 25th to 27th July. It is indeed good news, Pet, Fred having done so well. Congratulate him, with my love and say I am very proud of him indeed. I suppose, darling, that these 60 passed men represent all that enter Woolwich for the year, & intend to enter for R.E's and R.A's as well as for R.M.A. I see, by other papers "Overland Mail" & "Home News", that 54 (over 50 any how) have passed for Commissions in R.E's and R.A's at the end of this year, so, working it out, Fred would be a long way up from bottom, if he were to keep terms, and did not fall back among the lot who have now qualified. You speak in your letter, of his having made application, to enter R. Marine Artillery, & putting the thing together, without having it explained, I take it, he would have the preference in any such application, over any one who stands below

him in this list. I have no-one to talk to fully about it, as no one here is a good enough friend for me to open my heart to. Now, if I am right so far, it seems almost a certainty, that there would be more than the 21 above Fred, who aim for RE or RA commissions, so Fred would have a pretty sure chance, even if there are only 2 commissions as R.M.A. going. Tell me, darling, how far I am right in my conjectures. It is bad luck to have only 2 vacancies, but if my theory is right, the chance is very good. What a pity it is, that we could not afford to let him keep his terms, and try for R.E., but tis no use in grieving or thinking any more about that. Tis pretty certain that R.M.A. is the one best chance for him, to live independently on his pay, & we ought feel proud, that he is capable of getting something better. There were 16 commissions this year given for RE, & 38 (I think) in R.A's, and it seems very probable Fred could work himself up the few places to bring him within the 16th, at the end of the terms he would have to keep. But alas! alas! Poverty - to think that my not doing better in life should bring a punishment on our children.

There is a thing I have always been intending to write about, ever since the question of a commission was thought of, Fred's name. You had better find out, from some one who knows, whether he ought not to have Junior after his name, mine being the same. Lots of people should be able to tell! I know of a school fellow of mine, who accidentally sent his name with one name omitted, & he could not correct it afterwards, & was advised not to say anything, for fear of vitiating his commission, by showing it was a wrong name. I think, in Fred's case, it might not make any difference omitting the Jr, but it might, & you had better ask some one.

This is now Tuesday morning, before breakfast, and last time of writing. I have 2nd exchange to put in, so I don't believe there'll be room to write all I want to, but I will weigh.

Fred's likeness is first rate, but there is a great change in him. He looks much older, more of a man, & less like what I used to know him. Now, darling, mind and tell me, if I have worked out Fred's case aright. I suppose things may be settled, & definite news come, before answer to this can reach me, but it has taken a good deal of thinking, and I must know how far I am right.

I must say a word more, about the Surveys you prophesy for me to be on. At first, as I wrote above mistook slightly, think you meant surveys going on from here, but I now see - it is the connection from India with the Burma line. I am not sure what has settled about that, but I don't want anything to do with the work north of Mandalay. Everything, in the way of work, must be deferred, till the working season comes on, & there must be many like me, waiting.

Tell Tom, I am very pleased to hear, of his having behaved properly, about that shopman's money. It shows, he has the feeling of an honorable gentlemanly boy, while I think, the name of a Cad would apply to the youngster, who tempted Tom to cheat. I have a sort of feeling, that all our children would behave properly, like that, when tempted to do a low dishonorable thing.

I find I am tied to this quantity of paper, so as to allow the 2 of Ex to go in, & there seems such a lot more to write about. I can't somehow write to other people than you, darling, when I am hanging on here, loafing as it were.

By the way, regarding Tom's trouble with the little Bacon. Is it not a brother, who has been returned to his Mother's hands in disgrace? Any boy, with ideas of honesty like Master Terry (is that the name?), can hardly expect to turn out well, or succeed in life. Tell Tom what my views are, & so I am proud of his victory.

Now, darling, I seem very near end of paper, and not half written that I wanted to. You seemed pretty well, & cheerful, so I suppose bad time (which you were expecting, previous letter) had come and gone, leaving you feeling well. Poor old Pet. We have had such rain, all yesterday afternoon, & into the night. It poured nearly all the time. I am making a mistake, I fear, in writing now. I should be out for a walk, & finish this when outside is not practicable, but I can't run the risk of your being neglected. Now darling, this is pretty well filled, so I'll go out for a few minutes with the dogs.

All my love, Fred.

"pinch nez" - a type of spectacles (French for "pinch nose")

R.E. - Royal Engineers - R.A. - Royal Artillery - R.M.A. - Royal Marine Artillery. Fred (senior) is worrying about the form of junior Fred's name because that his commission is a formal and legal document, with his name on. By the way, the commission of Fred (junior) didn't have "Junior" on!

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Rangoon, 25th Aug 88

Emmie darling

There must have been some silently formed resolution, to begin my letter today, which I can't resist, otherwise I had much better not, as I don't feel capable of writing a word. I was out this morning, walking with the dogs. It was fine, & the sun occasionally shining, & when I got back after 10, I was very warm. Immediately after, it began to rain, & I got quite chilly, & I suppose feverish, & I now am oppressed with indigestion. It has been raining now for hours, & looks like continuing indefinitely, which of itself is depressing enough for anyone. So I think I must write only little now, & have the hope of better spirits tomorrow, or Monday, or Tuesday, all of which are before me to finish this. The Mails have taken to come in, on Saturday, instead of Sunday, now regularly, & it gives one quite a time for answering letters - half the week.

I had a miserable failure, last evening, at a dinner party. Last night, I had made a party of four, with three among 'em capable, of any amount of talk, but as evil luck would have it, one of the talkers got seedy, one was frightened by the rain, and the third was 45 minutes late. He was a crazy party rather, & forgot that he would require a cab, which of course could not be procured, when sent for at the last minute. So you can imagine my frame of mind.

As I said, your letter came in this morning, & there seems to be a lot to write about in it, but it must, I think, be put off for tomorrow. You seem free from seediness, darling, which one of the things that comforts me, as much as any other, but your

uncertainty and anxiety about the Boys arrangements seemed to weigh on you, & I don't wonder at it. But this is to be left till tomorrow.

I had a letter from Owen, a day or two ago. He is waiting for something to do in Calcutta, as I am here, but there is one advantage to him, in being there. He is attached to the Secretariat, & is doing duty for a youngster who has gone up to Simla for a few days. Not a very proud position, but better than doing nothing, & he probably will get presidency allowance, that will pay his Cab hire. His idea is that it will probably will be Nov, before any thing is started, on which we can be employed. He is a bad hand to write, but I will write, & get anything out of him, that is possible.

I did not make much out of business this early, as it happened, for yesterday, as far as this letter was concerned, was utterly wasted, what with walk with the dogs, several and various & sudden showers of rain, which upset all arrangements for going out & coming in, reading the new English papers, & being stuck there by rain, resulting in my not writing a word during the whole day. I am so sick of this rainy weather, & wish I could see my way out of it, but that's no good.

Now, darling, for your letter, 1st to 3 Aug. What awful weather you must be having, rain almost like a monsoon, but I do admire the way the British people go on about, "never minding". The English certainly are not fine weather creatures.

I am sending back Fred's School report. It seems to me simply splendid, and it might be useful to him hereafter. Look for it in the newspaper. I am a little in doubt however, about this being the very last report about he will get - it being 2 - 1/2 of 2nd term left, as it alludes to his having "finished satisfactorily xxx his school career". It should, I think, be kept by Fred. We have great reason to be proud of our boy, and we are. I do hope soon to hear the result of the appn. for R.M.A. He deserves to get what he wants and asks for. I feel much the same, as you say you feel, about the waiting and waiting for things to be settled, the only difference being, that you can talk the events over, as they come or are coming, which I have not a soul to speak to, or take any interest in them. I have been puzzling away, over all you have told me, about what is going on, and the conclusion is, F has sent up application, for a Commission in Marine Artil. Answer has not come yet, but there has scarcely been time. You think, however, F: cannot go to Germany, for fear he should be sent for, & be away. I wish I was near. Perhaps tis no use waiting, & it will turn out, as I say. He might go to Germany, whether or no. If he gets his Commission, & hears of it before starting, he could get leave. If reply comes late, you could open it, & send it on to him, for anything necessary to be done. Tis good to let Swells know, one has private affairs, & can always done, without ruffling them over *bandobast*, always providing, when leave is necessary to be obtained, it should be applied for. His arrangements, to go beforehand, and being absent when reply comes, could not be thought ill of, in any way, or by any one. It would be an awful pity, to miss the trip to Germany, just at the finish of his school days. However, tis of no use, for good or otherwise, my writing as I sit here. If the trip holds good, they are away from home 12 days ago. Jeannie says, F was going down to see Binney, & they would arrange such matters, so, I suppose, there is really nothing to prevent F going, & I hope next Saturday



to hear, it's all right, according to my point of view. By the way, it was a first rate idea that of yours, send him down to see Binney. You are a first rate *bandobast wallah*, and always were. I take it Binney was not going to Bedford, before starting for Germany. According to my Geography, one could get from Cambridge without going through London, but not so as regards Oxford, so B intended to pick up F on the way, & go straight off.

With regard to Tom's report, it is, I think, very good. He is nearly a full year younger than the average age, & there must be lots very much older, in a form of 20 boys. There is nothing scored under, to attract your attention to. There is nothing worse than fair, in any of his work, & he evidently has made himself a favorite ("attentive bright and pleasant to deal with"). I do not understand all the book. There is much of it, but it seems to me, both you and Jeannie have overlooked that he had "passed for standard of Form above represented by XX in writing and Latin. I suppose, getting a remove means, to a certain expert, the number of boys pushed up from below, as well as the vacancies in form above, so Tom being 4 should go up.

By the way, darling, don't baby him too much. He must be made a man of, some day. I don't care much for the Lady's remark "What a sweet little fellow, that is". I'd rather he show a little sourness occasionally.

Tis 20 minutes past eleven, & I must start for breakfast, & finish, if there is anything more to write, after. I must give the dogs 5 minutes run at least. It will be sure to rain this afternoon, according to the usual programme.

By the way, I saw in a paper the other day, the account of the Byle shooting. It appeared in the Indian Engineer, a paper for which Spring writes a good deal. I have been promised the loan of the paper so as to take a copy & I think I will send it to you. If I remember rightly, it was not sent home, and I have lost or mislaid the original which we got at Poona. Tell me in your next, & if you want it.

I have often been going to write for another Ear spray thing - you know? The last you sent got worn out, & I feel the want muchly. There is not one to be bought in Rangoon. If you will get one, and send it first opportunity.

You don't seem to have much of a day at the boat race. That young lady, Miss Bessie, ought to learn to steer a boat. I quite understand the contretemps, of running down a racing boat, spoiling your fun. Jeannie says, you went and hid yourselves. I am so sorry for you and the party, darling. I am quite proud of Jeannie, being able to row, but, stir up Bessie to do something, that will give her exercise & amusement. She used to be fond of running about enough, when she was a very young lady, to wit, at Kotri Slee, and Fred being so keen about shikar shikar killing rats, I think it was. It will be time enough to do the Duchess a little later on. I hope her dignity won't be hurt at my alluding to her original style as Young lady.

The a/c, of the Haileybury Speech day, has just turned up. It was enclosed in "Times" two or three weeks ago, & it happened that I read the paper at the Club, & it remained unopened. You did not tell about it, as you usually do, darling, & only this morning, I fancied the paper look uncommonly fat, & so opened it. It tells about Speech

day, Binney's exhibition, and Fred's prize, also about that trial, regarding young Hut, that I inquired about, in a letter since. Did Fred ever speak of that? All you say in your last, about Mr Robertson's talk with Fred, occurred of course long after, when he was coming away, a day or two before your letter. Tis no use answering, about returning to Haileybury, darling, in the event, of his not getting a commission in the R.M.A. I think, I wrote about this, in last letter. Can he not get in next year, and would Woolwich be more much expensive (if any) than Haileybury. It would do him more good to go there if he sticks to the commission idea. The Exhibitions, I take it, would not be tenable for him, unless he went to Oxford or Cambridge, but I am all at sea about it, and next mail will bring other news, that may upset anything we may decide on.

I fear, this is not a very good production, but there is nothing to write about in my surroundings, & my going over your letters won't be of much interest to you, after such a long time has elapsed. I am a little indigestioning since breakfast, & don't feel bright enough to be amusing, so I might as well stop. I think I will go and have a walk with the dogs, and make a start before rain begins. It generally does so about this time, & I shall be sold. I was not out this morning, & shall get blue moulded, & not able to eat.

I find myself forced to buy a new thin suit. That you sent only does for the afternoon & evening, when it is cool. I have been wearing that thin French tweed one, made, I think, in Madras - do you remember? Mixture of yellow, red and black & drab. It got moth eaten, & now with darns, & other signs of wear, tis pretty near disreputable. All my others are too thick, those that remain, I was hoping to last, til I got to Calcutta but it's no go.

Now, darling, with lots of love to you & all the flock, ever your own Fred

*"The account of the Byle shooting" is the amusing account of an incident in Fred's career, when Emmie was with him. This was given at the start of this book. It was published in 'The Indian Engineer' on April 18th 1888.*

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## Calcutta

Rangoon, 4 Sep 88

Emmie darling

I am not going to write much at this sitting, only just enough to show that I am sane. There is not much to spare however. I hope to finish on board ship, on the way to Calcutta. Orders came for me at last, on Saturday evening, and since then I have been in a state of preparation, more or less. All my packing appears, however, yet to be done. Things that I have had in daily use, since I came to Rangoon, are all out and about. I intended doing it yesterday, but it took me all day long, to get my pay settled, & the cheques for it in the office, & I was able to do absolutely nothing besides, did not get back till after 5, to my *tiffin* at the Club. I find it's no use, darling, trying to write now. The bills, about me, are all wrong. One man has neglected to send his, and must now be looked up personally, in his shop. Besides there is my banking business, & remittance to you, darling, to be seen to, & I must off. I intended having my packing done most scientifically, with a view to the change of climate in India, but alas, the time seems very short, although it's all day till 3 tomorrow morning. I wish you were here, Pet. Good bye now till from board ship.

Sep 6th

This is Thursday, and we have been two days out, & I must write a little, day by day, till the time of posting on the ship. I got no further yesterday, than get the paper cut, & idled away the morning, to have the afternoon turn out so rough, to make writing impossible. It rainy and wet and disagreeable too, so I lost the day as far as this goes.

Now, darling, for news. There is not much, that I can tell you in this letter. Orders came by telegram, from "Works" Simla to "Works" Burma ("Works" means Sec to P.W.D.) "Dibblee posted to Survey Kotri to Delhi - instruct him to proceed to Calcutta, and get instruction there". So I know nothing beyond, & no-one else could tell me. Everyone has been congratulating me, on getting out of Burma, but what I am going to is all mystery as yet.

We have heard from the newspapers, that such a survey is to be made, and that Horace Bell is the Chief, but no particulars have come out, and the news is old. However, their having telegraphed for me, after so long silence, make me think, that I shall be among the first to join, & probably will have the choice of Divisions, which is an advantage. The middle Divisions will be in a howling wilderness, while both Delhi & Kotri ends will probably be very nice. I am inclined to think I shall choose Delhi. It is such a cheap place to live, and the climate is first-rate, during the cold weather. Kotri, for the hot weather, would be best, but probably, before hot weather comes on, the work will be over. But I must leave detail, until after I hear more in Calcutta, & then you shall know all.

I look forward to meeting Owen, & hearing if he has anything to tell me, about seeing you and the young people. He is not much good, however, at that. He does not talk much, except about some fad of his own. But it something, that he has seen you.

I was so tired, of kicking my heels at Rangoon, and feeling that no one cared anything about me. I should soon have given up writing altogether. You must tell Jeannie and the boys, not to think hard of my not writing to them direct. It was as much as I could do, to write your letters, Pet, and as I said, if I had remained longer in Rangoon, those would have almost have - have certainly dwindled. I shall try and do better after this, when the prospect and my surroundings brighter.

It was pretty rough yesterday afternoon, & many passengers succumbed, but this morning, there is an improvement. The sea has gone down, & there has been only a very little rain, so all are more cheerful. There are two ladies on board, and they have not shown since yesterday morning, and probably will not be seen, till we get into the river running up to Calcutta. I shall not miss them, as I don't care for strange women. It's fairly cool, & that's a source of comfort. I sleep in my cabin, which I have to myself. A shower of rain, at night, causes great discomfort, as the awnings let the wet through everywhere, and the cabins are water-tight.

My *boy*, who by the way, was a very good one, left me in Rangoon, & I feel a little helpless over my baggage, but it will be all right, after getting to Calcutta. It would not do to take a *Madrassi boy* from Rangoon anywhere up into India, for the sake peace, with the rest of the household, besides that, he would want enormous wages.

This is Friday, darling, and we are going along splendidly, with smooth sea and sun shining. There is only a very little swell, but all the seasick people appear to have recovered. We expect to reach the Sand Heads, mouth of the River Hoogly tonight, and will be have to anchor and wait for day light, and the tide to go up the river. We ought to get to Calcutta about 2.

I intended to keep this open till the last, but the latest time for posting on the ship is this afternoon, and as there may be some risk in posting at Calcutta, when I shall be very busy, I think I had better post it on board.

There is a lot in your letter, darling, I want to answer and write about, but it must be put off next mail. I shall have no letter from you, and probably not for three weeks. Next time, write c/o Post Master, Calcutta, and I will leave direction about my new address. I shall send home £30 this mail, as I could not feel sure, how much you had left, and did not like to risk leaving you short, when so many payts would be coming due.

I have written a note to Fred, & it will go in this, & soon I shall write to Binney & Jeannie. It was a weight off my mind, getting orders to come away, & I will tell you, in some later letter, all that made me feel anxious, whilst I was kept in Rangoon. You will understand, my not feeling in the humour to write.

I have got the notes for difference of pay, of R.E. & R.M.A., as concerns Fred's prospects, and will write about it next time, although I dare say, that will be too late to affect the question. I dare say you have settled it all by this time. I have been talking to some military passengers on board, whom I know, & they say the R.M.A. is a first rate service and so, even supposing Fred is fitted for something better, he won't be badly off, and there won't be reason for regret in choosing the R.M.A. However, more about this, in my next. I hope Fred did not miss his trip to Germany.

There is a great temptation, to leave this open till tomorrow, in Calcutta, on the chance, of having some further news for you. I might hear something at the Secretariat, but then there is the chance that establishment may be closed, being Saturday afternoon. I must, I think, resist, & if there is anything worth it, I can simply write another.

Now, darling, with all my love to you and all the flock, Ever your own, Fred.

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S.S. "Nevassa" 6 Sep '88, between Rangoon & Calcutta

My dear Fred

I must send you a few lines to go in Mothers letter, to tell you directly, how pleased I am at your success. I think it very well indeed, your getting such a good place in the exam for Woolwich, and the few, with whom I could talk to hear about it, say it was particularly good at your age, and without special preparation. It appeared in the English papers, & people, who knew me, saw it and congratulated me. With regard to the future, the matter will be pretty well decided, before this reaches you, and your prospect seems a very fair one, in any case.

It grieves me to think, that if I could afford a little more expenditure on your education, something better might have been done for your career, but I am very proud to think, you have such good abilities, and have shown such industry, in what you have done.

You are very young to go out in the world, but I am pleased to know, that you have this faculty of making friends among your elders, & this no doubt will be a help you, to teach you the ways of the world, without so much risk from the dangers of it. Tis well and necessary, for the pleasure of life, to have companions of your own age, but it is an immense advantage, to have your elders to take an interest in you, and help you in difficulty.

I hope your matters have been so arranged, that you will not lose the trip to Germany. You would enjoy that, & it would do you good, & the appropriate opportunity seems a better one, than is likely to occur again. I was so glad when I first heard, that you and Binney were to go together. I have journeyed about this world a great deal, and there is nothing one feels the want of, so much, as companionship. One can always see more, learn more, and enjoy yourself more, with a suitable companion.

Your Mother must tell you the news about me, as I am telling it in my letter to her. I am thankful to be, at last, out of Burma, with the prospect of not going back, and I was weary of waiting for orders.

I scarcely know where you will be, when this gets home. Probably your trip to Germany will be over, if you have it, and you will be at home waiting for your next move. God bless you my boy. I hope you may be as fortunate in your career, as you have shown yourself fitted for.

With much love, your affectionate Father, F.L.Dibblee

Fred junior was indeed young. He was only 16 years old at this point.

~~~~~  
Calcutta, 17 Sep 88

Emmie darling

There is a long interval, between this and my last, because, not only the time, saved between Rangoon and this, comes in, but the change of the Ship sailing from Bombay, the monsoon being over, take place this week. I would have been better to have written on first arrival here, as my spirits were better, & I felt able to look forward, to something good going to happen, but the waiting for orders has commenced again, and here I have been a full week, since my arrival was reported, and no notice taken of me. I have had so much of that, you cannot feel surprised, at my being depressed.

The only news I have is, that Horace Bell, I, and two others, are appointed to the Survey, Kotri to Delhi. H.Bell is down on the shipping list, to arrive in Bombay, on 28th of this month, so I suppose the course of events will be, to wait till his arrival, when he will settle how the start is to be made.

I may have hinted, in my last, that something was probable, that might bring good luck to me. Did I? It was foolish to do so, as it turns out not to be probable. Horace Bell was said to be told off for acting in place of a swell going home, but I hear now that the arrangement won't come off. So I shall simply have to go on, in the same position as before.

Ah me!!! If I can simply worry on, till next August, then three months leave will be due, & I can get home to you, my Pet. That is now what I look forward to, as the only piece of brightening before me.

Now, darling, I must tell you, now it having passed, all that was in my mind, when I was staying in Rangoon, that kept my spirits down, & prevented cheerful letters, & writing separate letters to the young people. I was seedy, my digestion apparatus got all wrong, and I could neither eat or digest enough to keep me going. I did not eat a mouthful of meat for three months. I got rest from work, got away from Mandalay, & proper treatment, and so gradually got right again. So I am just as glad, nothing was said about it, but you can understand my being pretty low spirited.

Then, when the time passed without orders, I could not help thinking, that they could not find anything for me to do, & that possibly, they might compel me to retire. There are some who think they will have to go, Hogarth among others. Now, there is not much chance of that, as there are several new schemes under contemplation, like that I am going on, and there really do not seem to be men enough to do the work.

Owen is here, and we see a good deal of each other, meet & walk every day, & dine together several times a week, & I have met several men I knew before, but Owen is the only friend, & tis good for me his being here.

I think, I shall do my tub, & off to breakfast. The hours do not permit eating a *chota hazri*, & I find, two cups of tea do not last long. I expect to see the Gazette of India, by the way, in the Club, & that may give me some information. I forgot to tell you, Pet, that I am at the Bengal Club.

This is afternoon, after I stopped. Such good luck happened to me. First, your letter of 16th to 17th, with Jeannie's, and that from Binney of 13th Aug, from Berlin, came in, having been returned from Rangoon. I scarcely expected it so soon, but was so glad to get it.

Then, orders by telegram came from Simla, which put a stop to the weary waiting, complained of in the first of my letter. I was getting weary. It has put a stop to my hope of an improved position, to be sure, but I did not want to have a repetition of the Rangoon business over again.

I see by your news, then, Binney has gone, & Fred has stopped behind, awaiting the action of the Admiralty, so I suppose he has decided to take the R.M.A. if he can get it, and the chances seem good. Thus, I suppose, tis given up, the idea of his staying on at Woolwich, in the hope of the better service of the R.E. Tis best, darling, under the circumstances. I really could not afford any more expenditure, on his education, and if the direct Commission is attainable, it should, I think, be accepted. There was just the chance, of my getting back again to my former position, where I should have had an extra Rs1000 a year pension, & in that case, the effort, to get the improved position for Fred, should have been made. Tis extremely hard, that his prospects in life should suffer, when he has shown himself capable of some thing better, but the fact of my poverty is insuperable.

I had commenced a letter to Binney direct, & you must tell him so, but the orders for my movements, coming in when I was at it, have spoilt it. I shall be busy tomorrow, from early morning, and very much fear, there will not be time to take it up again.

I am writing now, whilst waiting for dinner time to come, there being just a little time, but there will be no time tomorrow, I fear. Those wretched people at Simla took a whole week to reply to the telegraph, about my arrival in Calcutta, & then replied on Saturday afternoon, after the office (Secretariat) here been closed, so that I got it only at midday today, & now, there is actually not time to do, what is wanted, and get the things on to Bell, before he arrives at Karachi. I will wind up, Pet, for fear there'll be no time tomorrow, but will add something if it is possible.

Love to all, Ever your own, Fred.

P.S. I had a letter from Parker this morning. He appears to be all right, but does not say much about himself, and nothing about his girls. I must try & write to him, before leaving this. I shall be within a day's journey of him, when I get to Delhi. He congratulates on Fred's success. Fred.

~~~~~

17th Sep 1888, Bengal Club Calcutta

My dear Binney

I will let you have a few lines to yourself, direct, this time. I began this last week, as your Mother will tell you, but was obliged to stop, as orders came from Government, which took up all my time, in carrying out, just as I sat down to write. I have everything now ready, & shall start myself in a day or so, stopping on the way at

Cawnpore, to buy tents for my share of the party. Mother will tell you most that I have to write about, so you must interchange with her.

I have managed to find out, by good luck, much about the country I am going to, having fallen in with the Survey Officer, who made the Survey for the maps of India, in that part. It will be rather a new experience. Every thing is very different, from other parts of India where I have been. At both ends, there is cultivated lands, with the usual villages at intervals, with green fields & trees for shade, but all the middle part, about 300 miles of it, is a sandy dessert, without a tree, and with hills composed of sand, which moves, to cause a variety of landscape. After a heavy rainy season, if the rains do penetrate into the country, they sow crops of grain, wheat, millet etc, between these hills, but as a rule, there is not much verdure, and then only, and only then, a few village of any size, in the whole distance.

They say it is a very healthy country in the cold weather, very cold and dry, & just the place for a feverish subject like myself. The thermometer goes down to 26° Fht, and precautions, to prevent suffering from cold, in tents, at night, are necessary. All the water freezes solid. The line is intended for Military purposes, to have another route to get troops to the frontier of Afghanistan. There can't much much ordinary traffic, except at the two ends.

It is said, there are enormous flocks of sand grouse. You will remember the English papers, being full of these birds having been found in England, this summer - the "Pallas Sand Grouse". There are other things to be found in the way of game too, so they will help to find us in food.

Your Mother sent me your letter, from Berlin, & I was glad to see what a nice affectionate letter you write, She deserves all the love and affection you can feel, & also show. Never had a boy a better Mother, or one to whom more is due. You appear to have made a good beginning with your Germanic trip, & I hope Fred has been able to join you. It will be a benefit to you both being together.

I fancy I remember the hotel, you were staying at, & I think I stayed there, for a short time, 26 years ago, but the time is so long, I can scarcely remember. I have had only one mail, of the letters sent to Burma, & am now three weeks behind, in news from home. Doubtless, before this reaches, you will have got back to Oxford, and all the uncertainty, about Fred's prospects and doing, is past. It makes me anxious to get letters, when there is so much to learn, but there seems no way, of directing a letter, from its intended destination, when once in the Post Office in this country.

The weather here is a little hotter, than it was in Rangoon, but I am glad to get away from the incessant rain. They had Cyclone there at Rangoon, since I left, which made the weather more uncomfortable. I must now stop, & finish Mother's letter.

With much love, Your affectionate Father F.L.Dibblee.

Fred worked on the East Prussian railway in 1864.

Bengal Club, Calcutta 23 Sep 1888

Emmie darling

This is three days before mail time, but I must write, for fear I shall be too busy for it, tomorrow & next day. I have been pretty fully occupied, since the last mail went out, in making preparation. I told you, did I not?, that I was to send off equipment, tent, instruments, stationery, etc, for Bell, to Karachi, & for myself, to Delhi, and that is what I have been busy about, & yesterday, I think, all was arranged for, and Bell's share gone. My own share is to be at the Station tomorrow, when I go to book it.

Oh, these Government offices, they do take such a time, to do anything. Pretty near the whole day would be taken up with one of them. In the telegram from Simla, I was told "Letter follows", and after 6 days, I was informed that the letter had gone to Delhi. I therefore have been working, pretty nearly, in the dark, as I have a very faint idea, of what work is to be done, and by the time I get to Delhi, the preparation will be all finished, & the information too late. So I telegraphed to Delhi to send the letter here, & expect it tomorrow. What a muddle is made of things, to be sure. There was no time to lose, so I had to go on somehow, and act on chance from my own intelligence. I think, there are three times as many things, as are wanted, got, but that can't be helped.

I thought to get away from here, tomorrow night, but cannot manage it now, as my own purchases are not complete, & I must wait for the letter from Delhi. I had a big day yesterday - several hours at least at Belviews - buying enamel iron plates, dishes, cooking pots, and a tremendous lot of tin stores. The plates and things are not as good as those you bought for me, at the Army & Navy, but I think they will do very well, but the things, I got for *Degchis*, are perfectly charming. They say, tis not good, to take copper things to be tinned, as you cannot get tin *wallahs* in the Wilderness, so I have got those thin iron enamel, very light and nice shaped. In my other purchases, I think I did fairly well. The old man (Belview's) at the shop said, I had forgotten nothing. He has a pretty big order, which I shall have to pay for, tomorrow. My principal things, left to be done, are cartridges, for such shooting as I may expect, and the supply of liquor, that I require for self and friends, for the next four months.

Since writing the above, I went and paid a visit on Mr and Mrs Finney. You remember him at Poona, darling? And I have finished the letter to Binney, so your share of letter, this time, will be so much shorter. I would not have time, I fear, to write much more, as tomorrow, I shall be dreadfully busy, and as soon I cease to be busy, I must start for Delhi. I wish you could be out with me, in this camping season. The Country is not so good, but the weather, they tell me, is splendid, so cold & dry. I am going to invest in Country cloth at Cawnpore, and make a big Ulster, & how I wish you could tell me how to do it.

Tis Monday morning, and when waiting for my tub, and before the busy day commences, I must write a little more, but it is to be kept open, for another day, as I have strong hopes of getting your letters, one week in advance of the last. I got, this morning, a letter from Rangoon, which, having been directed to the Club, would come straight, but yours, and all others through the Rangoon post office, would be sent to c/o Post Master

here, & require time for the process of redirection, so, by this afternoon, I dare say, yours will come.

Finney, as you will guess from what is above, has taken to himself a wife, who seems a very nice little woman indeed, not particularly pretty, but full of common sense apparently, and a woman shows that, she is pretty enough. Finney asked after you, and after your boy, that he used to hear about when at Poona.

Another wants to be remembered to you - Mr Gray. He is living in Chambers, in the same building as I, here. You remember he was Hutchinson's Deputy at Poona. Hutchinson has retired from the Service, & gone, I believe, to Australia. Do you ever hear from Mrs H?

I stopped to go to breakfast, and then out on my duties, and, as I guessed might happen, your letters, 21 to 24 Aug, came in, with all the news, of Fred having got his Commission, and of all your excursions & shopping etc, in consequence. You certainly are a wonderful woman, to do so much. I only hope, you got through with it, all right. I am so glad of Fred's business being so satisfactorily settled, just as it was first contemplated. Tis better, darling, under my circumstances, that there is not to be 2 years more education expenses. Of course, tis a pity, that he has not got the best he was found capable of, but the question, of what we can afford, could not be lost sight of.

I am glad too, of another thing, that Fred will [*have*] a share at least of the trip to Germany. A fortnight will be better than none. By this time, tis of course all over, & further progress will have made, in serious business. Give my love to Binney & to Fred, and my congratulations to the latter. He is a combined Army & Navy now. Tis an absurd idea, but it occurred to me on Sunday, when talking of the Army & Navy Store with Mrs Finney.

I forget whether I told you, how to send letters. I think I did say to send c/o Postmaster Calcutta, when first I got my orders to come here, but I ought, in my last letter, to have said address Delhi. All my correspondence must, I think, go through there, till the expedition is over, but of that, you shall hear more, when I get to Delhi. I am still without the letter of instruction, which was to have been sent back, but I suppose it will come tomorrow.

You must enclose and send Binney's letter to him. I have not room to put in another envelope. Thank Jeannie for her letter, & for sending me Binney's. I like to keep the run of his journeyings, & hear his impressions. Must stop.

Love to all. Ever your own, Fred

"Army & Navy" - a well-known shop in London.

Fred was supposed to leave for his new job the day after he posted that last letter, but he developed a fever. Three days later, he died. He had mentioned, in one of the letters above, how sudden death could be in India. His friend, Owen, looked after him, and when Fred died, Owen wrote this letter to Emmie:

Gt Eastern Hotel Calcutta, 30 September 88

My dear Mrs Dibblee

I hardly know how to begin, or how to tell you of your great loss. Your Dear Husband is no more. It is with a sore heart, I wrote this to you, knowing the grievous loss to it is to you, and your Children, but to you of all. To me it has been a great shock. I have lost a dear and true Friend.

He died on Friday morning last, peacefully and free from pain or fever. He intended to start for Delhi on Tuesday, but, having fever, the Doctor would not let him go. The fever continued on Wednesday and Thursday, but he did not appear to be seriously ill, and was able to take soup and other food, and, on Wednesday, eating *tiffin* at his club. On Thursday, I was with him, as usual, and he ordered soup for dinner, but I thought him looking worse, and as the Doctor had not come (as he said he would), I wrote over to him, and he came at ½ past 9, but apparently did not consider him in any immediate danger, as he did not write to me, or inform anyone at the Club.

On Friday morning, when I went over, to arrange about a room in the Hospital for him (as he and I had agreed upon the previous day), I found him delirious, and looking very bad, so after giving him two spoonfuls of iced water, I went off to bring the Doctor. I could not find him, so brought another Doctor, but it was then too late. His own Doctor had, in the meantime, come, but he was beyond human skill, & soon after expired.

The Doctor said his heart was weak. This, with the fever, caused his death. He was quite unconscious, and must have died without pain. Indeed, all along, he may be said not to have suffered any pain, but complained to me the day before, of the weariness of inaction in bed.

He was buried the same evening, in the Circular Road Cemetery. A good many officers of this Dept, and some of the members of the Club, attended the Funeral.

I have taken charge of his things, and arranged about his tomb, but will not trouble you about these matters now. You will hear from me by next mail. Accept my heart-felt sympathy. I can say no more

Your sincere friend, T.E.Owen

~~~~~

*T.E.Owen also wrote the following obituary for Fred:*

**The Late Mr. F. L Dibblee, M. Inst. C.E.** - A correspondent writes:

It is with much regret that I allude to the sudden death of Mr F.L.Dibblee, at the Bengal Club, on the 28th of September. He was well known in Madras and the Punjab, where he had for many years filled high positions in various Railways.

After practicing abroad, in Brazil and elsewhere, he came out to India, as Chief Engineer for a Railway Company in Madras. He afterwards joined the P.W.Department; and was for some years on the Indus Valley railway; then as Engineer-in-chief, Delhi-Ferozepore Railway Survey, the Western Deccan Railway Survey and the Cuddapah-Nellore State Railway near Madras.

He was an Engineer of ability and high professional attainments, and an able writer - though, no doubt, at times, his pen flowed too fluently for his own good. Those who knew him well, found, under a somewhat cynical manner, a kind and generous mind, and a clever and entertaining companion.

He was on his way to join the Delhi-Kotri Survey, having come from the Toungoo-Mandalay Railway, in which climate, he, without doubt, contracted the fever which led to his death here.

Chief Engineers are certainly given many opportunities of encountering dangers and difficulties in distant tracts without the hope of reward or honor. The result is often only a man less, one widow more, a few fatherless children, and no pension to pay.

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## **And afterwards**

It is natural to wonder, what happened to Fred's family after he died. I will cover Emmie, Fred junior, and Binney.

### **Emily Dibblee, Fred's wife**

Fred's death was very sudden, and unexpected. In the past she was worried if she missed a weekly letter. Yet here she received Fred's last letter, cheerful and planning his next job, and the following week, she got the letter describing his death.

In our family records, we have a diary she wrote after his death. She is deeply grieving, and she thought that the diary would help her. A few pages later, she stopped it, as it was making things worse. She mentions in the diary rereading Fred's letters. That may explain partly why pages are missing, and the rest disorganised. (It took quite a lot of effort to reorder them!)

But we don't have to stop there. She lived another 11 years, and died in 1899. Fred's letters, and obvious admiration for her, shows she had a strong character, and dealt sensibly with the problems in her life. Fred described her as always working for other people, and I am sure this would have helped her out of her depression.



This photo says on the back "Bottom row: from the right, 1st. Jeannie Dibblee, 2nd. Mrs Emily Dibblee, 3rd Bessie Dibblee, 4th Mrs. Blackett. At Bedford." It is undated, but Bessie and Jeannie look much older than the previous photo. They are wearing red cross arm-bands. There is no reference to such activity in the letters, nor any reference to Mrs. Blackett. So I assume that this is after Fred's death, and it shows that Emmie managed to continue leading the useful life she obviously valued. The photo also shows Jeannie and Bessie, who look cheerful enough!

## Frederick Dibblee, junior

Just before his death, Fred (senior) was obviously worrying about his second son, Fred (junior). Young Fred had done well in his education and exams, and might have been able to qualify as a Royal Engineer (R.E.). This was an army post, and such people were paid more than Fred (senior). Indeed, at one point, he complains about this in his letters! However, to train as a R.E. would mean a longer education. Fred (senior) would have to pay for this, and couldn't afford it. Instead Fred (junior) joined the Royal Marine Artillery (R.M.A). He got his commission September 1888. This meant that he could live on his pay immediately. Fred (senior) heard about the commission just before he died. I am so glad he did, although that may be irrational of me! But also, this meant that there was no burden on Emmie's limited financial resources. He might not have been able to finish his education for R.E.

Here is Fred in his new uniform and H.M.S. "Triumph", his first ship. A marine is not a sailor, but serves on board ship. As Fred (senior) says, as a joke, "combined Army & Navy" (like the shop).



Fred had a good career. His service record includes the Benin Expedition in 1897, and the Battle of Jutland in 1916, where his ship's certificate says "Major Dibblee's knowledge of German has been very useful during the war." He reached the rank of Brevet Lt. Colonel. He had to retire in 1919 due to deafness,

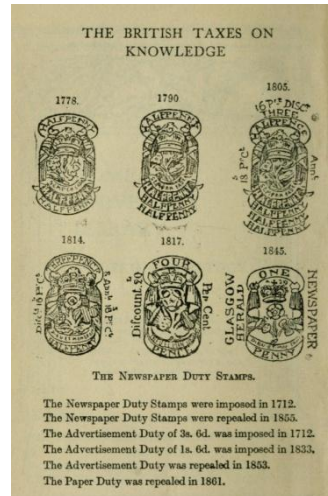
## George Binney Dibblee (known as Binney)



Fred (senior) was worried about Binney's education and career. He wanted Binney to go into the Indian Civil Service, but unfortunately Binney couldn't pass the necessary exams, despite extra tuition. Instead, he went to Balliol college, Oxford University, with an Exhibition. Later on, he got a scholarship. This would have contributed towards the cost of his Oxford education, and one of the letters suggests that a teacher of Binney had lent him some money also.

Binney got a First in History. In 1890. he was elected to a History Fellowship at All Souls, and later became bursar of that college 1920 to 1924. He also helped to support his mother and siblings.

Binney was a manager of the Manchester Guardian. He wrote books on various subjects, including economics, psychology and journalism. The page shown is from his book *The Newspaper*, 1913. He was manager of the Manchester Guardian. At one point, he was Chairman of the Association of Journalists. His Who's Who entry said he "combined scholarship with business in an unusual degree."



I am sure that if Fred (senior) knew about the careers of both his older sons, he would have said "We have great reason to be proud of our boys, and we are."

## Locations

**Bhamo:** in north Burma, near the border with China

**Bombay:** now Mumbai

**Burma, Burmah:** now Myanmar

**Calcutta:** now Kolkata

**Cawnpore:** now Kanpur. South east of Delhi.

**Chota Nagpur:** west of Calcutta

**Delhi:** now capital of India

**Hazaribagh:** north west of Calcutta

**Jamalpur:** West Bengal, near modern Bangladesh. Emmie thought it was "Jubblepoor"!

**Karachi:** now the capital of the Pakistani province of Sindh.

**Kotri:** in Sindh, now in Pakistan. Fred refers to Kotri Slee

**Kyanksai:** now Kyaukse, about 25 miles south of Mandalay

**Madras:** now Chennai - Fred had worked here in the past.

**Mandalay:** in Burma.

**Mulmein:** now Mawlamyine. In Burma.

**Myobingye:** now Myitnge. Near Mandalay. Fred is building his Bridge here. He gives

**Myitnge** as the name of the river.

**Nigapatam:** now Nagapattinam. Port near Madras..

**Nellore:** north of Madras - Fred had worked here in the past

**Ootacamund:** south of Mysore in southern India

**Patiala:** west of Umballa (now Ambala)

**Penang:** in Malaysia.

**Poona:** now Pune. South-east of Bombay.

**Prome:** now Pyay. It used to be the railhead to get to Mandalay.

**Rangoon:** now Yangon

**Ranchi:** south of Hazaribagh

**Sambalpore:** now Sambalpur, west of Calcutta

**Simla:** now Shimla. In north of India. Fred uses it to mean "Government of India".

**Sind, Sindh:** now one of the four provinces of Pakistan

**Singapore:** well known!

**Sukkur:** In Sindh, now in Pakistan

**Trichy, Trichinopoly:** now Tiruchirappalli. South of Madras

**Umballa:** now Ambala, in southeastern Punjab

**Yamethin:** south of Mandalay



## Vocabulary used by the British in India

**alaka**: Fred glosses this as "policeman's beat"

**almirah**(Hindi): wardrobe or chest of drawers

**anna**(Hindi): small unit of Indian currency. There were 16 annas to one rupee. An amount of rupees and annas would be described like this: R 1/8.

**baba**(Indian): baby

**baboo, babu** (Hindi): Indian clerk in British India.

**bael** fruit sherbet (Hindi & Persian): a sherbet is a sweet drink. Bael fruit is a local fruit.

**bail** (Hindi): ox. Fred spells it "byle".

**baloo** (Hindi): bear

**banao**(Hindi) - fabrication. Fred describes it as "made up story".

**bandobast, bundobust** (Hindi): system or discipline, organisation, arrangement

**bazaar** (English): marketplace. Fred uses it to mean provisions

**bearer** (English): domestic servant (British India).

**bliss** : Fred says this is a dacoit General

**boy** (English): native servant (although Fred also uses it to describe his sons!)

**buchcha** (Hindi): young animal.

**bungalow, bungla** (Gujarati): One-story house in India surrounded by a wide veranda

**burra burra Sahib** (Hindi): very great man.

**cheroot** (English): A cigar with square-cut ends.

**chitty, chit** (Hindi): small note, reference for a future employer, official letter

**chokra** (Hindi): young boy. Used by the British to mean a boy employed as a servant.

**chota hazri** (Hindi): meal served shortly after dawn

**chowkie** (English): police station - variant of "choky"

**chuprassy, chaprasi** (Hindi): official of some kind

**coolen** (Hindi): the great grey crane

**dacoit** (Hindi): bandit.. Dacoity means activity by dacoits.

**dâk, dak** (Hindi): post

**dah** (Burmese): heavy knife. Fred describes them as "native swords".

**degchi** (Hindi): one of the most common utensil used in Indian cooking.

**diq, dikk** (Hindi): botheration

**dour, dowering** (Hindi): expedition

**durzee** (Hindi): tailor

**gharry, gharri** (Hindi): carriage

**ghusal** (Hindi): bath

**golies** (Hindi): ball. (The English "goolies" may derive from this!)

**Hazri taiyar hai, mezpar** (Hindi): "Breakfast is ready, on the table."

**hathi** (Hindi): elephant.

**home** (English): often means England, even if the person doesn't live there

**Humaru kupra tyai karo**: I think this means "Breakfast is ready".

**janwar** (Urdu): animal

**karki, khaki** (Hindi): dull colour, yellowish brown, or green

**kismis**: (Persian): raisins

**kitmutgar, khitmatgar** (Hindi): male servant, with responsibility for waiting at table.

**kuchcha, kutcha**: (Hindi): makeshift

**lakh**: (Hindi): one hundred thousand

**mahout** (Hindi): elephant driver and keeper.

**mahwa** (Hindi): local tree, whose flowers are used to make an alcoholic drink.

**Maung** (Burmese): Fred said that it is a title, such as Mr.

**memsahib** (British + Hindi): white European woman, wife

**mistri** (Hindi): foreman

**Pathan** (Hindi): a Pashto-speaking person. I am not sure that Fred uses this correctly!

**peon** (English): servant

**peg** (English): a drink of strong alcohol

**punkah** (Hindi): ceiling fan, often operated by a servant.

**pucca, pukka** (Hindi): genuine, proper

**rupee, Rs** (Hindi): Indian currency. Fred later gives an exchange rate of about 15 rupees to the pound. See "anna".

**sahib** (Hindi): white European man in British India.

**sajar** : Fred describes these as "those jungly carts with solid wheels that they use for carrying wood & stone on".

**sambhur** (Hindi): type of deer

**sepoy** (Urdu): native employed as a soldier

**sowar** (Urdu): a native trooper

**shikar, shikarring, shikari** (Hindi): hunt, hunting, shooting.

**tamasha** (Urdu): a fuss or commotion

**tank** (Indian vernacular): pool or lake. This is the origin of the English word "tank" meaning a metal container for liquids.

**tiffin** (English): A light midday meal, or snack between meals.

**tikka gharri** (Hindi): hired carriage

**Tommy Atkins** (English): British soldier

**tope** (Tamil): a clump of trees, especially mangoes

**tum tum**: a dog cart

**wallah** (Hindi): person, servant.

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Other books about my past family:

"Dibblee - a Pioneering Family" - this covers the direct line of my family back to Robert Deebell who emigrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1633.

"Mobs and Meetings" - accounts of two family members - Sam Favell, an English radical before the Napoleonic wars - Maud Charlesworth, involved in the early Salvation Army

You can find these on Amazon.

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